

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I have some more petitions here that relate to the feed grain assistance program that the government is doing away with. It says that the provincial government FeedGAP (feed grain adjustment program) program has been an essential tool to the preservation of a competitive livestock feeding, slaughter, and packing industry in the province.

And then there is also one that deals with the provincial livestock cash advance program, was vital in putting the Saskatchewan livestock industry on equal footing with the national grain sector.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition here. I'd like to read most of it to you, Mr. Speaker, and to this Assembly.

To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That back pain and other highly prevalent neuro-musculo-skeletal disorders are extremely costly to the Canadian economy;

that scientific evidence clearly illustrates that chiropractic treatment is the most cost-effective and efficient therapy for such disorders;

that in the face of an ever-increasing pressure to adopt expensive new forms of high technology treatment, chiropractic care has proven to be a low technology, low cost, conservative, and safe form of treatment, consistent with the true "wellness" model of health care;

That the government publicly asserts it remains committed to the basic principles of medicare, namely universality, comprehensiveness, accessibility, portability, and public administration;

That the government is acting to destroy these principles as they apply to chiropractic patients;

And that the government's proposed restrictions on this therapy will clearly cost more both in dollars and in patient disability.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate full coverage and universal access to chiropractic treatment and that your Honourable Assembly withhold consent from any government proposal to discriminate against chiropractic patients by

charging them fees not assessed for any other medical treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I have two of the same and they're right full. And they're probably from Churchill Downs because they're all Regina citizens. I won't read the other one off but, Mr. Speaker, they look to me like they're all Churchill Downs.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions regarded to health problems. I'll just read the last paragraph as it's much similar to those read by my colleague:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate full coverage and universal access to chiropractic treatment and that your Honourable Assembly withhold consent from any government proposal to discriminate against chiropractic patients by charging them fees not assessed for any other medical treatment.

I have two copies of this petition fully filled. They also appear to be from the Regina city, and hope that the members opposite will take note of that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions related to the chiropractic care. And as my colleagues said, that these petitioners would like to see the government:

... reverse its decision to eliminate full coverage and universal access to chiropractic treatment, and that your Honourable Assembly withhold consent from any government proposal to discriminate against chiropractic patients by charging them fees not assessed for any other medical treatment.

I would like to present these petitions, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have some petitions dealing with chiropractic care in this province. Mr. Speaker, I won't go into the petition. There are a number of signatures fairly filled on these two, all from Regina. Looks like Regina Lake Centre is the constituency that most of them are from. Mr. Speaker, I would like to present these.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions regarding chiropractic care. And it is the same concerns that other members have brought to this Assembly. They are primarily from Regina, but also people from Southey, Tyvan. Looks like a pretty good cross-section of the city of Regina on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, and I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, the following petitions have been reviewed pursuant to rule 11(7) and are hereby read

and received:

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to restore the livestock cash advance program;

And of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to restore the FeedGAP program.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding recent Korean-sponsored investments into hog operations in British Columbia: (1) Did Korean officials or investors inquire with any Saskatchewan government department about making similar investments into Saskatchewan's hog industry? (2) If so, why did the Government of Saskatchewan refuse this investment? (3) Have any other foreign investors made inquiries into making investments into the hog industry in Saskatchewan? (4) If so, who are these investors? (5) Have any agreed to invest in Saskatchewan's hog industry? (6) Have any stated that they refuse to invest as a result of the cancellation of the feed grains adjustment program? (7) What persons has your government approached for foreign investment into our hog industry?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'm very delighted to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly three very special people seated in your gallery. Heather Howard who has been a lifelong friend of mine; and a special friend of hers, Michael Soroski; and her nephew Mark Howard, visiting from Chilliwack today.

We've already spent some time together touring this building and I would ask all members here to join me in welcoming them to the building today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great honour for me this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, an esteemed delegation from the People's Republic of China. They are representatives of the Chinese state-planning commission whose task is to work out the five- and ten-year plans for economic development in the People's Republic of China. They also have the responsibility to determine the investment plan and the construction projects of various kinds, and the allocation of capital.

They are here to study Canadian dry-land farming technology, to discuss and exchange views on policy development relative to agricultural policy and the evaluation of policy, and to study the effectiveness of a

variety of economic development strategies, and to develop a relationship with Saskatchewan governmental and business organizations in order to maintain a liaison with us in their own development. And we appreciate their presence here this afternoon. Welcome.

I'm planning to meet them this afternoon in my office, and welcome to Saskatchewan, to Canada, and we look forward to a good relationship with the members from the People's Republic.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to acknowledge the presence of the people here from China. I want to do it for two reasons. I recognize a constituent of mine who has been closely associated with the people from China. His name is Ross Korven and he's seated up in your gallery together with the members there, and I want to welcome him here.

I also want to say to those people who are here from China that my nephew, who is a doctor in veterinary medicine, is going to be serving in Hohut in Inner Mongolia for next year, teaching animal science and range management, and he's going to be teaching that in English so that those people over there can learn to speak the English language. And I too want to ask the Assembly to join with me in welcoming these people here from China.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a gentleman who's in your gallery today. Jerry Reuhs is from Shaunavon, Saskatchewan; has been very active in the 4-H industry and the cattle industry in Saskatchewan; is a good friend and a very, I think, important person in the province of Saskatchewan for the work that he's contributed. So I'd like everyone to welcome him here please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank Mr. Reuhs for coming and visiting us at the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly an individual seated in the west gallery, Mr. Fred Sutter. He has had a very long and distinguished career in municipal, urban, and rural governments in the province. I had the privilege of working with him as administrator of the rural municipality of Corman Park which surrounds the city of Saskatoon, a position that he still holds. And I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming him to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Policy on Gaming

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Gaming Commission . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's correct, it's you.

Nevada tickets are sold in hotels to support health care and supplement the income of our stricken hotel industry. Some hotels use vending machines to dispense these tickets.

After allowing the machines for four years, the Gaming Commission is now advising licensees to stop using these machines, saying that they are prohibited under the Criminal Code. Many hoteliers are now being told that they must stop using machines that they purchased for \$700 each, or have their licences to sell Nevada tickets revoked.

I'm wondering if you would comment on the logic of this policy, sir.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — For the logic, the hon. member might want to check with the Manitoba Court of Appeal, from whence the decision comes. It was a decision in Manitoba, the Keystone decision, which severely restricted the right of any one who isn't a registered charity to run gambling. And that has meant a rethinking in a number of areas. The commission has told the vendors that they will consider some form of compensation.

As the member did not point out, but might have, some of the purchasers were given authority in writing from the former Gaming Commission to buy them. And then they bought them and a couple years later it turns out the Manitoba Court of Appeal says they're illegal.

The Gaming Commission is considering some form of compensation but that process has not been brought to a conclusion. But it is being considered.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), Mr. Minister, has advised hoteliers who sell Nevada tickets that these machines are allowed by the Department of Justice. It says that the machines are not slot machines — and if you look at definitions of slot machines, indeed they are not — but that they are vending machines and are therefore legal in the eyes of the federal Justice department which is responsible for interpreting the section of the Criminal Code dealing with gambling. And I shall table a letter for your reference.

Since the machines have not changed since the RCMP have written this letter, and given that the Criminal Code has not changed, will you instruct the Gaming Commission to reverse its decision?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I want to say with respect to the last comment, the Gaming Commission is independent of government. The gambling in this province involves an enormous amount of money and an enormous potential for ill, an enormous potential for patronage.

My instructions to the Gaming Commission have been simple and straightforward. We want the letter of the law obeyed without exception, and we want the thing run fairly and without any political interference. That applies to the member from Saskatoon Greystone as well as the member from Regina Churchill Downs.

The Gaming Commission have determined, I think correctly, that the advice which was given to them earlier was incorrect. I said they are considering some form of compensation. The Gaming Commission is not walking away from the problem. They are enforcing the law and will continue to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, there is absolute and utter chaos in this province regarding the gaming industry. Recent media reports indicate confusion over the territory in which video lottery terminals will be allowed. And I want you to explain to us what criteria are used for where these machines are placed and how the revenue will be split with government.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Gaming Commission, again an independent body, is making this determination without political interference by members from either side. The criteria which I would expect they would adopt, but it will be their decision, will be ease of installation, maximizing revenue. This is a form of activity which has no really redeeming social value except that it provides money for the Crown. And thus they are, I think, following those two objectives.

I want to say again, unlike the situation prior to October 21, 1991, when politics played a large role in the administration of gambling in this province, since October 21, '91, we have removed political interference. There is none. The instruction . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — I find it rather shocking that you would applaud that, and I will tell you why, Mr. Minister. I am truly amazed that you are willing to tell this Assembly that you have, in essence, no gaming strategy for the province of Saskatchewan. And listen, just listen for a moment. There has been tremendous growth in North America in this particular industry, particularly when we're talking about native jurisdiction, which are exempt from state and provincial gaming laws.

Now given that institutions like . . . whether we're talking about Saskatoon's Prairieland Exhibition, which derives almost all of its income from casinos, and which in turn, by the way, supports the horse racing industry . . . How do you intend to deal with the possibility of native gaming operations being established in Saskatchewan? And given what you've answered to date, you'll just simply say, it's none of your responsibility, which it is.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — First of all, I've now got a copy of

the letter. As I suspected, it's five years old. The member might have said that when you tabled it. The letter from the RCMP is five years old and is, they would admit, out of date. You asked a number of questions in your comment. I guess there's no practical limit. I'll pick the last question you asked, which was Indian gaming.

We have been meeting with representatives of the Indian community in an attempt to work out a mutually acceptable approach to Indian gaming. They have legitimate claims and legitimate concerns, and so do we. We believe that both can be accommodated, and I think both sides have found the talks productive and we are both optimistic about it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our province we have non-profit groups in limbo over proposed changes to bingo rules and regulations. We have a horse racing industry in limbo over the lack of a long-term plan. We have exhibition boards and native groups soon to be at odds over casino gaming rights in this province, and you can't even decide whether a slot machine is a slot machine or is a vending machine for Nevada tickets.

Now when is your government finally going to put forward a coherent gaming strategy, which is your responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We have, Mr. Speaker, a coherent gambling policy. The real question you asked is, when am I going to be able to communicate that to the member from Saskatoon Greystone? I despair of ever being able to do that.

I say to the member from Saskatoon Greystone, we have a coherent strategy. Prior to October 21, 1991, gambling in this province was run by and large with no regard for the law and with patronage the only real consideration. That's been brought to an end. I have outlined for the member from Saskatoon Greystone our approach. It is to minimize social problems, maximize revenue, and run it in a fashion in which patronage plays no policy. And that's our strategy. And by and large it's being accepted, although I agree, not well understood by at least one member of the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Closing of Echo Valley Conference Centre

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister, the minister responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). Mr. Minister, it's not bad enough that you have broken nearly every contract signed by the former government. But now it appears, Mr. Minister, that you're shutting the door to any potential projects in the future — projects that are supported by the private sector and by local communities.

Mr. Minister, will you table the SPMC documents that show the analysis that it is better and smarter to moth-ball the Echo Valley Conference Centre, thereby throwing 23

people out of work, rather than allowing the private sector to develop this particular piece of property? Would you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — As I've explained to others — although perhaps not in the Assembly since the matter wasn't raised in the estimates which were just concluded — the Echo Valley Centre, we were . . . This government has been losing about a half a million dollars a year on the Echo Valley Centre. We deemed that to be an inappropriate expenditure when all we were getting was a convention centre. In this day and age there are other more important priorities.

We have had discussions with at least one private developer which have not been brought to a conclusion. It is a complicated problem involving as well Indian land claims in the area and Indian land entitlement. The discussions are ongoing. All that is . . . the only alternative which I think we've rejected is to continue to operate this at an operating loss of half a million dollars a year. In this day and age that's simply not an appropriate expenditure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, local people take issue with that statement. It seems that the only motive visible to anyone in the area is that you're out to politically destroy anything that was connected with the former government even in a remote way.

Mr. Minister, people in the community . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. I've asked the government members to please not interfere. Let the member have his turn to ask his question.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, people in that community are convinced that the conference centre can become a tourism destination area. Would the minister kindly indicate to the Assembly what process was followed in the nine months that this government has been power, what process has been place that has delayed the proponents of the project as put forward by the community?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Before I was appointed, there was set up a committee to study this, composed of some members of the Assembly and some local community people. I got their report. It did not contain any recommended course of action, I think, because they had difficulty finding an acceptable solution to this problem.

It is not acceptable to continue to operate that convention centre at that sort of a loss. We are not opposed to private development, but I have pointed out to the private developer with whom I've met that the Indian land claims is an issue which they have to meet and cannot ignore. And my information is the private developer is in fact pursuing that, contacting the Indian band involved, and there may be some agreement rising out of that; I don't know.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, you know full well that proponents of this project have talked to the aboriginal community as long as a year ago about that particular piece of property and that particular development. That isn't a recent occurrence and you know it full well. What your government has been doing is interfering and slow-walking as much as possible this process. Don't blame it on the aboriginal community.

Mr. Minister, your community advisory committee did not recommend anything because you asked them not to. But they did put forward 14 options, and 12 of those 14 options suggested some type of private operation.

Why is it, Mr. Minister, that you have refused to truly consult with the community and support the private sector, so it indeed could help the Government of Saskatchewan out in negotiating a reasonable settlement to this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The member is asking these questions because we did consult with the community. I met with members of the community, outlined the problems and the options. That resulted in the mayor of one of the communities making some comments at a town hall meeting. You're here asking these questions because we have fully consulted. I have met with everyone who ever asked for a meeting with respect to this. We have consulted fully.

The consultation though has not produced an acceptable solution. We still look for one, but there is no simple solution to that centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, people in the local community out there are telling you that there are solutions and that they're tied to the private sector. Mr. Minister, will you tell us who was on that advisory committee and will you table that committee's report in this legislature. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm prepared to table the report. I couldn't offhand recall the members of the committee. There were eight or ten. I couldn't do justice to them all. But I'll certainly table the report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Well I'm glad you're going to do that, Mr. Minister, because what it will show to the Assembly is that the private citizens on that committee fully supported some type of private operation at Echo Valley.

And is it not also true, Mr. Minister, that the three NDP (New Democratic Party) MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) that sat on your so-called advisory committee were the ones who recommended the government close the centre, throw people out of work, rather than allow private ownership? Is that not true, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, when the facts finally catch up to the member from Thunder Creek, he will find that the report recommends no particular course of action because there isn't one that is simply and easily available. And the private developer who we are talking about is as aware of that as we are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I find it odd that you can't remember the names of your own three colleagues that sat on the committee. Is it any wonder that the people in those communities out there feel some apprehension with a minister that can't remember the names of his own colleagues on the committee, that can't remember that 12 of the 14 options presented by that committee recommended privatization, recommended doing things to make the Echo Valley Centre a destination tourism possibility.

Mr. Minister, that is why people out there are asking us to bring questions to this Assembly, because you seem to have selected memory loss when it has to deal with the private sector and developing that. Mr. Minister, will you give the assurance to this Assembly today that the recommendations of your three NDP colleagues will not influence the options in this report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The opposite is true. The recommendations of all of my caucus members are very important to me and every member of Executive Council. The opposite is true; they'll be taken very seriously.

I say to the member from Thunder Creek, when the facts catch up to you, when you finally have some inkling of what you're talking about, you're going to find out the report doesn't recommend what you think it does.

So the member might want to save some of these devastating questions for the time . . .

An Hon. Member: — Give us the names of those three people.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — One of my colleagues was kind enough to pass me the names and I will now read them out if you prefer. As I pointed out to you, there's more than just the three members of this Assembly on it. There is the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden; the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood; the member from Melville; and Mayor William Schmidt of the town of Lipton; Hazel Jardine, Fort Qu'Appelle; Chief Wayne Goodwill, Standing Buffalo Band; Webb Palmer, Fort Qu'Appelle; Mayor Fran Hahn of the town of Fort Qu'Appelle; Frank Hinkson of Fort Qu'Appelle; Noel Starblanket from the Starblanket Band, are the members of the committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regional College Board Appointments

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday

the Minister of Education's answers with respect to the NDP's political hirings and firings were not adequate. The simple question to the Minister of Education — and I remind her that she did indeed fire the chairman of the board for the North West Regional College at North Battleford because he was appointed by the previous administration — Madam Minister, can you tell this Assembly, given your government's pledge that no hirings would be based on politics, can you tell us if any of those hired to that board have any significant positions with The Battlefords New Democratic Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as I outlined yesterday, we found the state of the regional college boards in this province in a state of total disarray, displaying the previous administration's lack of commitment to rural education in this province. We undertook to bring all of the membership in all of those nine boards that we are responsible for appointing, up to date.

Out of some approximately 60-odd positions, we reappointed some people who were eligible for reappointment, Mr. Speaker. There is a limitation — it's two terms and then you're not eligible. We reappointed some that had been appointed by the previous administration. We paid attention to the region because they all represent large regions. And we made sure that there was representative representation from throughout the region. This was also the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, it looks like you're more interested in political representation than regional representation. Madam Minister, you know full well that the person you first appointed to that board is one of the member from The Battlefords' main political campaigners, Shannon Lindgren, who also happens to be the president of The Battlefords NDP association.

Madam Minister, that's simply political patronage. You and your Premier may think that you can hide behind what's going on with health care in the RMs (rural municipality) and nobody will notice, but the people of . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I remind members that it's simply unacceptable to yell across the floor, and to please not to interfere if a member is trying to ask a question. I don't know what the question is; I can't hear it. I'll ask members, please, not to interfere, and that's on both sides. He's getting interference from both sides.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, the appointment of Shannon Lindgren — how does the appointments of NDP presidents to boards and commissions square with your election promises and your Minister of Labour's pledge to curtail political hirings?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, appointments to regional college boards should not be interpreted as

hirings and firings. They are appointments to a board of directors which meets from time to time. They are not full-time jobs, and they don't . . . people that are appointed to regional college boards don't get \$1.3 million a year like George Hill did, either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you said you wouldn't do it, so how do you justify hiring Shannon Lindgren, the president of The Battlefords' NDP association, to this position, which is a job for which she is paid?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, might I remind the hon. member opposite that over 55 per cent of the voters in this province voted for the New Democratic Party.

I would say that in trying to make random selections of interested, qualified people for various appointments to boards and commission, it would be almost impossible to miss the odd New Democrat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The Speaker: — Could I make a suggestion that a question be directed from the Leader of the Opposition to the member from Quill Lakes, and maybe they could carry on with the question period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — I have a question, Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the same minister. Madam Minister, does that mean that when I had you on the board of Saskatchewan Research Council, that you automatically qualified as a Tory?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for what was going through the mind of the minister of the day. I will say that I much appreciated the appointment, and I much appreciated and enjoyed my association with the then minister on the board of Saskatchewan Research Council at the time.

And I guess it just shows that maybe the Conservatives miss now and then, too.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the same minister. Madam Minister, you have just proved the point, Madam Minister, that governments do appoint people to boards and commissions because of some capability which I believe that you had, that's why you were there.

The simple fact . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — The simple fact, Madam Minister, that you have seen fit to break the commitments of your leader and your Premier, and commitments made in this House

by the Minister of Justice, in a blatant political appointment, I say, Madam Minister, sullies the reputation that you had. Madam Minister, sullies the reputation that you had, and able to come to my board as a Tory cabinet minister. And what you have done is a pure hypocritical move, Madam Minister.

And I ask you, take the opportunity to clean up your record and get rid of this NDP president.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I think that we have chosen a very balanced group of people from across the province. No doubt some of them are members of other political parties, because they were chosen for their competence, interest, and the time that they would have available to give to this task. They were chosen on the basis of their competence, not their political affiliations. And we certainly do have . . . have appointed people who have been known activists in other political movements other than the NDP. And we have appointed them for their competence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 83 — An Act respecting Pension Benefits

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Pension Benefits be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 78 — An Act to amend The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce for consideration of the House, The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan workers are not content to be passive observers in the economy of Saskatchewan, as unemployment and dislocation take their toll because of the fluctuation in the economy of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan workers are ready, willing, and able to be and play an active role in determining the work they do, the conditions they work under, and the type of enterprise they work in.

Saskatchewan workers are among the most productive, the most dependable, and the most innovative in Saskatchewan. But thanks to the policies of the previous government, thousands upon thousands have had to leave their homes, their communities, and their province in search of meaningful work.

Tragic is not too strong a word to use when one realizes

the countless opportunities that have been missed, Mr. Speaker. Opportunities missed because of the preoccupation with huge investment or mega projects; projects that often provided more jobs to out-of-province specialists than to real Saskatchewan people. Opportunities missed because there was insufficient attention to local initiatives that would have created jobs in Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan families. Opportunities missed because of the failure to confront and deal with the ever-increasing deficit. Mr. Speaker, opportunities missed because of an unwillingness to admit to the people of Saskatchewan the problem for our economy that the huge and massive \$14 billion debt was creating.

Mr. Speaker, if that \$5 billion . . . \$15 billion debt had been properly invested, that money could have created about 30,000 construction jobs with the result, plants and equipment employing up to 25,000 people in productive, long-term jobs and employment here in the province of Saskatchewan. These missed opportunities are heart-breaking to our friends and families who have had to leave the province. Saskatchewan people working here deserve a chance, Mr. Speaker, to help create opportunities to live and work here in Saskatchewan.

The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporation, or LSVCC program, will continue to give them that opportunity by encouraging Saskatchewan employees to make equity investment in Saskatchewan in small-based and medium-sized businesses.

But the program needs to be given a higher priority and, Mr. Speaker, our government has done that. The program had flaws inhibiting its effectiveness and our government is addressing those deficits. This Bill will streamline the program, add compliance features, increase the maximum contribution limits, and maintain compatibility with the federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is in addition to the many other responsible measures we have already taken to stimulate economic development in the province, and those include measures for the small-business sector to reduce their tax burden; measures for the manufacturing sector to begin to phase out the E&H (education and health) tax on manufacturing and processing inputs to improve their competitive position in Canada; measures to improve the ability of tourism industry to attract tourists and entertainment dollars to the province of Saskatchewan; and finally, Mr. Speaker, measures to enhance the community bond program by strengthening the Community Bond Review Committee and eligibility criteria and making the program accessible to co-operatives here in the province.

(1445)

In addition, Mr. Speaker, my department has made available this year another \$20 million in guarantees for the community bond program which will stimulate investment and jobs in small business at the grass roots level. In response to the call to streamline government and reduce the number of agencies involved in economic development, we will be doing this in my department with fewer staff and a smaller budget. This Bill is an

important part of our economic development plan here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments the House will be considering flow from the same process that resulted in the first realistic provincial budget to be presented in this legislature in some 10 years. That is, we looked, we listened, and then as a government, we acted. We looked at the present legislation which requires a process that can be costly and often cumbersome; legislation that also contains inconsistencies between the provincial and federal legislation as a result of the federal amendments announced in their budget in 1992.

We listened to the labour and business groups, various government departments and Treasury Board, as well as the federal government. We acted with this legislation designed to address their concerns and strengthen the LSVCC program.

Mr. Speaker, The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporation Amendment Act increases the contribution limits per investor in provincially registered LSVCC from \$3,500 to \$5,000 as announced in the budget speech. The Bill does not increase the limits for federally registered corporations. We anticipate that this amendment will make the program even more attractive to Saskatchewan workers resulting in greater numbers participating.

Another amendment allows for the registration fee to be charged. This will help offset some of the cost of administering the program, part of our commitment to ease the burden on Saskatchewan taxpayers and reduce the provincial deficit.

The Bill will enhance the ability of the LSVCC to raise equity capital for small and medium-sized businesses. This will create or maintain jobs and allow corporations to diversify their activity. In addition, an amendment adds compliance features to protect taxpayers' interests.

Mr. Speaker, I now present The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporation Amendment Act for second reading.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister likes to speak in glowing terms about his record of economic development in the province and all of the great things that he's going to do. Well maybe I'd like to just take a few minutes to review that record for the benefit of everyone here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Let's start off with AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.). One of the first things that they did when they came to government was cancel that project, Mr. Speaker — an opportunity for people in this province to have the benefits of nuclear energy, nuclear physics, nuclear medicine brought to the province, research jobs, all of that type of thing.

And what did they do? They threw it out of hand because they've got a few people in their caucus, a few people — wing-nuts I like to refer to them as — that have no respect

for the nuclear energy industry and absolute . . . They're afraid of it. That's basically what it comes down to. They're afraid of it, absolutely afraid of it.

The next thing that they did after they came to power, Mr. Speaker, after the budget was presented, some more real good initiatives for economic development were announced, Mr. Speaker: things like the cancellation of the FeedGAP program, the livestock cash advance. That will do wonders for the cattle feeding industry and hog feeding industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. It will totally devastate it; that's what it will do. That's the type of record that they have when it comes to economic development.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition started a number of programs when they were in government. The community bond program was an excellent example of Saskatchewan people investing in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there were share offerings in a number of corporations: Saskoil, Sask Potash Corporation, SaskPower. And we think it is an excellent idea to have people in Saskatchewan investing their money into corporations in Saskatchewan.

But what are these folks over here doing now, Mr. Speaker? Every single opportunity that's been presented to this province over the last number of months, they are quashing them, outright destroying any initiatives that were put together by the former administration. That's what their economic development record is, Mr. Speaker.

We find it appalling that they want to destroy deals like the AECL, absolutely appalling, destroying the feeding industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that they think that that's the way for economic development. It's incredible that they would think that. But, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what they've done.

This Bill, Bill 78, Mr. Speaker, allows people the opportunity to invest in Saskatchewan, and we support that, Mr. Speaker. We support that type of thing in this province and whole-heartedly agree with the initiative of having people in Saskatchewan invest in this province. But we do not agree with the initiatives in a lot of other areas when it comes to economic development.

And if he wants to take credit for the destruction of the AECL agreement, the FeedGAP, the livestock cash advance, things of that nature, it's up to him . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The minister says, are we going to vote for him. Well I'd like to remind the minister, Mr. Speaker, that his popularity and his party's popularity is plummeting like a stone these days.

The Speaker: — Order. I remind the member that we're on the Bill and not the popularity of members in this House.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm aware of that, and I'm sure you're aware of their popularity too.

The Bill sets forth the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for people in this province to invest in the province, and we support that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we would ask some time, though, that we

feel that it's necessary to go through all of the sections of the Bill to review it and consult with people about the various provisions within the Bill. I think that it's important that we take the time to do that, so I would ask to adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Lyons: — I wonder if I could have members' leave to make a very short statement?

Leave not granted.

Bill No. 79 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to move second reading of a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act as outlined in the May 7th provincial budget and subsequent announcements which have been made since that time.

Repeated budget deficits during the past 10 years have forced the government to make some very difficult or very tough decisions. This government is committed to putting an end to out-of-control spending. If this is not done, Mr. Speaker, we will place an impossible burden on future generations. Our children would pay a huge price for what would be our lack of will and, indeed, our failure.

The government announced in the throne speech that it would demonstrate a new determination to control government spending. This determination demanded that difficult budget decisions be made to restore the financial position of the province. Common sense and competence need to prevail with respect to provincial finances, and we must be fiscally responsible.

New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, are on record as supporting a pension plan for home-makers, part-time workers, small business, and farmers. The sad truth, however, is that Saskatchewan has been burdened with the highest per capita debt in Canada. We can no longer afford programs such as this Saskatchewan Pension Plan which is poorly targeted and doesn't deliver support to those who truly need it.

Since its introduction in 1986, the government has paid sixty-six and a half million dollars into the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Despite this, we learn that there is a further unfunded liability of \$43.2 million at the end of 1991, an unfunded liability which was projected to reach \$80 million by 1995.

Modifying the Saskatchewan Pension Plan is one of the ways we are taking control of this province's spending. The people of Saskatchewan recognize the deplorable state of finances in this province. They have also indicated that they want the Saskatchewan Pension Plan to be left intact, even if government funding is unavailable.

By amending The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act, the

government has been able to cut spending and still be responsive to this public demand. The modified plan will provide Saskatchewan people the opportunity to contribute to a personal retirement savings plan and therefore make plans for their retirement. This new plan will not be at the expense of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

This Bill provides for the elimination of government matching contributions after May 7 of this year and elimination of the guaranteed minimum pension on the day that this Act is assented to. Members will continue to get the benefit of their own contributions and government matches prior to May 7. What's being eliminated is the government subsidy to pay larger benefits. The amendments to the Act will allow plan members and other residents of the province to contribute to a voluntary pension plan to supplement their retirement income.

These amendments result in a plan substantially different from what members originally enrolled in. And to be fair to people who believe that this plan is no longer in their best interest, all members will be given the option to withdraw their funds in their account. A six-month withdrawal period will begin once this legislation is passed and the tax issues are resolved. Members will be notified when the six-month period commences.

People already retired under the plan will have their pensions adjusted to reflect the elimination of the guaranteed minimum. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to also point out a very important decision the government has made related to this. And that is that the government is committed to helping those seniors truly in need by increasing the Saskatchewan Income Plan benefits which was announced in the budget, which will be effective on October 1 of this year. The option to withdraw from the program will also be extended to these retired members. They may request a one-time, lump sum pay-out of their future pension excluding the government subsidy, as calculated by an actuary.

In addition, these amendments incorporate some important aspects of The Pension Benefits Act which, except for the investment provisions, do not apply to this plan. The Act will now empower provisions for the division of assets in cases of marital breakdown, identical to the nature to The Pension Benefits Act. It will also provide for regulations allowing members to receive an optional pay-out of small pension amounts.

Other amendments included in this Bill are of a housekeeping nature consistent with these announced measures and a provision authorizing the government to pay costs associated with these changes.

What remains is a program members can contribute to at their own option, to build or supplement their retirement savings.

This plan is the only tax-deferred savings plan available to members who don't qualify for an RRSP (registered retirement savings plan) because they don't have the necessary earned income as defined by Revenue Canada. Members' money continues to be invested by

professional money managers and has generated a competitive rate of return averaging 9.15 per cent over the past six years. As before there are no minimum contributions or fixed payment schedules. The money is protected from seizure claim or garnishee by creditors of any sort.

These changes to the plan are part of a new era in government, an era of living within our means. By instituting these changes now we are securing the future for our children and our grandchildren. These changes have been made necessary, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons: one, because of the financial situation that this province faces, and two, because the plan as it was, Mr. Speaker, has not been very well targeted, has not served the people who are most needing it, and therefore needs some substantial changes.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, and those explanations, I am pleased to move second reading of the Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Regina Rosemont on his feet?

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask members' leave to make a short statement. I've discussed this with the members of the opposite . . .

The Speaker: — Does the member have leave?

Leave granted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sergeant-at-Arms Birthday Greetings

Mr. Lyons: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity today to recognize an important day in the member of . . . officer of this Assembly. It's an officer who serves often with the thankless task of trying to keep us in order and to keep us apart from our jousting on a daily basis.

I refer of course to our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Bill Goodhand. Today is Mr. Goodhand's birthday, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask all members of the Assembly to recognize this, an important anniversary in the life of Mr. Goodhand, and also in recognition for his contribution to service in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would also from the opposition like to extend congratulations to the Sergeant-at-Arms on his birthday as well.

(1500)

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 79 (continued)

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with the Bill to make changes in the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. And I think we should maybe review a little bit of the history of the pension plan over the last few months.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget that came out in late April the Minister of Finance hacked and slashed his way through the economy of Saskatchewan and one of the casualties was the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. And I think it's important that the people in Saskatchewan recognize how this came about. I think it was a direct attack on the Kindersley constituency for not electing a member of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker. I think that was a large part of the motive of cutting off this program. Had very, very little to do with the finances and a whole lot to do with revenge, Mr. Speaker. That's what happened.

And then what did they do when they outright cancelled the pension plan? One day previous to the announcement of the budget, they sent out notice to the employees of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan there — lay-off notices, Mr. Speaker. One day previous to the announcement. They were in the process, Mr. Speaker, of ordering new stationery and things of that nature, needs for the upcoming year, and then they were given their lay-off notices.

Subsequent to that, Mr. Speaker, there was a great deal, tremendous public opposition to the cancellation of the pension plan. So, Mr. Speaker, what happened then was the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) issue really heated up in the province of Saskatchewan, and in an effort to try and deflect criticism on the government, they threw a bone back to the people of Saskatchewan. They gave them back a skeleton of a program that once was an excellent program — the Saskatchewan Pension Plan, Mr. Speaker. They threw a bone back to the people of Saskatchewan and gave it back to them in a very, very unpopular fashion. They gave it back to them minus the most important provisions within the pension plan, Mr. Speaker, which were the matching contributions as well as the minimum guaranteed pension, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance suggests that we recommended it. We never did recommend that, Mr. Speaker. We suggested that the government could take a look at the matching contributions. We suggested that they could take a look at other provisions within the program, but keep the program in place, Mr. Speaker. That was what we recommended, and that's what the people of Saskatchewan recommended.

They also suggested that if the government wanted to suspend the matching contribution for a very, very limited time, maybe that would be acceptable. But they didn't suggest that they could do both — cut off the minimum guaranteed pension as well as absolutely slash the matching contribution, Mr. Speaker. That was never recommended by anyone, regardless of what the Finance minister suggests over there.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister suggests that the program was poorly targeted. That's what he called it — poorly targeted. Mr. Speaker, 54,000 people in Saskatchewan received benefits and contributed benefits, money, into the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. And I'm sure they'll be glad to hear that they are one of the ones that were, as the Finance minister suggests, people who were poorly targeted.

Eighty per cent of the people within the pension plan were women — obviously poor targets, Mr. Speaker. Sixty per cent of the people within the pension plan have an income of less than \$16,000, I believe it is. Mr. Speaker, 60 per cent of the people have an income of less than \$16,000 in this province. Mr. Speaker, another example of poorly targeted — people with less than \$16,000 income. And the minister refers to them . . . as the program being poorly targeted.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister is wrong. I think he's completely out of touch with what the needs and reality with respect to the pension plan in this province. It was an excellent plan. That was the reason why people contributed to the program. That was the reason why there was tremendous opposition. That was the reason why there was the opposition from your back benches towards you, Mr. Finance Minister, with respect to the changes in the program.

You've been able to appease at least your caucus members by throwing back the pension plan in a skeletal fashion. But you haven't been able to please the people of Saskatchewan with respect to this, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan — and we have been receiving all kinds of calls and letters with respect to this — they still feel that the program was an excellent program and should be reinstated.

What I believe and what a lot of other people in this province believe, Mr. Speaker, is the pension plan will die a slow death as a result of the changes that they've made to it. The reason why it'll die that slow death, Mr. Speaker, is because people will look at the benefits associated now with the Saskatchewan Pension Plan — the changes in the program — they will look at those changes and they will say to themselves, I will compare the rate of return that I might expect from the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. I will compare it against all other options that I have for investing my money and if it isn't any better, then they will opt for another investment.

The fact that there isn't a government contribution any longer will contribute to that feeling within people that they should compare various investment opportunities rather than continue with the pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, and the minister suggests: what's wrong with that? Well, Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with that is that people will not be contributing to a pension plan; they'll be contributing to an investment fund or they'll be contributing to some other vehicle of investment opportunity that will not provide benefits for their retirement. It will provide short-term benefits, not like the pension plan that provided benefits for people in their retirement years.

I think everyone in the province, except perhaps the Minister of Finance, recognizes that their retirement, to have income set away for your retirement, is an important thing, Mr. Speaker. He has . . . the Finance minister has money in a retirement fund put away for himself. I suspect he thinks that that's a very good and useful thing for himself. He has over a million dollars in his pension plan, Mr. Speaker. Nice little tidy sum — over a million dollars in his own personal pension plan.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, 54,000 people in this province are poorly targeted. Mr. Speaker, \$1 million in his own pension plan, I suggest, is poorly targeted, very poorly targeted to one individual. One individual with a million dollars in his pension plan is poorly targeted; 40-some million dollars in a pension plan for 54,000 people of this province, I suggest, is not poorly targeted, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is targeted right where the need is, the needs of the people of Saskatchewan and not the personal needs of the Finance minister of this province, Mr. Speaker. And I think a lot of people in Saskatchewan, the vast majority of people in Saskatchewan, would agree with me whole-heartedly that he doesn't need that kind of pension; they need a pension.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to voice our concerns about the changes in the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. And I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will continue to voice their opposition to the changes in the pension plan, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 81 — An Act respecting the repeal of The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Criminal Injuries Compensation Repeal Act. In May of this year I announced a new strategy which will provide a comprehensive, province-wide response by the criminal justice system to victims of crime.

This new approach will respond to the changing needs of victims and the growing demand by victims for immediate and effective services to help them deal with the effects of victimization.

Until now, resources for victims in this province have been focused on providing some limited compensation for victims of violent crime through the criminal injuries compensation program. However, this approach has served less than 10 per cent of victims of violent crime. Compensation awarded some significant amount of time after the violent event has generally been small.

I believe it is time to shift the focus of victims' programs and expenditures away from this formalized and delayed response and concentrate instead on serving the immediate needs of victims.

Part of this refocusing of victim services includes making the criminal injuries compensation program more effective and more accessible and responsive to victims. To this end, The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act will be repealed. With the repeal of the Act, the operations of the Crimes Compensation Board will be ended. However, there will be a transition period during which the board will be able to deal with applications received by it before April 1, 1992.

The criminal injuries compensation program will continue in an administrative form. Applications received after April 1 will be dealt with under The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1992, which I am also introducing today. We are taking this step despite the fact that the federal government has withdrawn any cost sharing of criminal injuries compensation as of March 31, 1992.

This withdrawal of funding has provided further impetus to rethink the present structure of the criminal injuries compensation program to ensure that we provide the most effective services possible. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act respecting the repeal of The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are going to take a look at your observations, Mr. Minister, and deal with this. And when the critic is here we will be involving him in the discussion. There are definitely some questions that we want to raise in relation to this, and that might be his observations, but we want to take the time to look at it a little bit more closely, and therefore I adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 82 — An Act to amend The Victims of Crime Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1992, which I referred to a few moments ago.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments are part of a larger strategy which was announced in May of this year. This province-wide strategy will provide a broader range of services to more victims of crime across the province. This approach responds to the changing needs of victims and the growing demands by victims for immediate and effective services.

The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1992, will consolidate all victim service provisions under one piece of legislation. A broad range of victims' programs will be authorized under part 2 of this Act, while criminal injuries compensation will be dealt with under part 3.

Until now, the province's resources for victims have been, as I have mentioned earlier, focused on providing some limited compensation to victims of violent crime through funding of the Crimes Compensation Board. In our estimation, this approach has served less than 10 per cent of victims. Awards have been small and they have been received some significant amount of time after the fact. And there has been no way to ensure that the money paid out has been used to deal with the trauma and the injury resulting from a violent crime.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, to shift the focus of victims' programs and expenditures away from the formalized, delayed response inherent in the present criminal injuries compensation program. And as I mentioned earlier, the withdrawal of federal funding for criminal injuries compensation means that we must review how effectively we use the limited amount of money available

for victims, responding directly to their needs.

As part of the refocusing of criminal injuries compensation, I am introducing today The Criminal Injuries Compensation Repeal Act, and I have just spoken to that. With the repeal of that Act, the Crimes Compensation Board will be abolished. Amendments to this Act, The Victims of Crime Act, will set up an administrative process that will allow the Minister of Justice to provide compensation to victims of crime. Similar programs already exist in some jurisdictions and are being considered by others.

(1515)

The Crimes Compensation Board will complete its work with respect to applications received by it before April 1 of this year. Applications received after that date will be dealt with through the new process. The Minister of Justice will continue payment of ongoing awards ordered by the Crimes Compensation Board. And the minister will be able to review and vary such awards where that is appropriate.

Under the criminal injuries compensation provisions of The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, which I am speaking to now, the minister will provide compensation for monetary losses. These will include such things as medical, dental, and other services provided by health care professionals, funeral costs, lost earnings, personal property loss or damage, and maintenance of dependants.

The minister will not, as a general rule, pay compensation for pain and suffering. This is not to say that the trauma of victimization will not be addressed. It will simply not be addressed in the previous way by the payment of money.

Under part II of the Act, the emphasis will now be on programs providing initial crisis intervention to deal with the psychological injuries suffered by victims of crime. We believe that this will be more effective than the after-the-fact, pain-and-suffering awards made by the Crimes Compensation Board.

As I mentioned earlier, there was no way under that system to ensure that the money was used to deal with the trauma suffered by a victim. Under the new system, victims will get the immediate services they need through crisis-intervention programs designed to assist victims of crime.

There will also be some ability, under part III of the Act, to assist in the provision of counselling services to victims of crime. Up to \$1,000 per individual may be provided by the minister pursuant to the provisions dealing with criminal injuries compensation.

The new province-wide victim strategy, while designed to serve all victims of crime, will give particular attention to the needs of women, children, and aboriginal people. The strategy will be focused on developing immediate crisis-intervention services, enhancing justice services by creating facilities such as victim and witness rooms in the court-houses, and providing general support services to victims such as the refocused criminal injuries

compensation program that I have just described.

The money for the operations of the victim strategy will come out of the victims fund, which was established by The Victims of Crime Act in 1989 and is made up of surcharges on fines for criminal offences. It will not be a drain on the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to just make a few remarks.

I know that this is a very important framework to be discussing. It's a relative benefit to the society we live in because many times compensation is not made to those people who are victims of crime. In some cases it's financial and in some cases it's, as you suggested, Mr. Minister, it's psychological; sometimes it's a medical compensation that needs to be made.

In all of this there has to be a way to determine whether, in fact, there is a bench-mark of monetary loss in relation to this. And in compensation, in insurance, and in various areas similar to that where compensation is paid for accidental loss or accidental death on the part of, let's say something like SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) . . . I'm familiar with that because my father was a part of that and died in a car accident and so we have . . . I understand that there is a certain degree of impact when that happens. And in compensating the victim and the victims of this kind of a loss, we have to take seriously those people who are hurt by the victims of crime, the victims of circumstances that are not criminal. And I think that needs to be addressed.

We're going to take a look at all of the aspects. We probably have some significant questions in relation to this. We want to deal with that. And therefore, Mr. Chairman, I move the debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, to request leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce my brother-in-law, who is in your gallery, sir, Craig Gordon. Craig is from Alberta. He has his roots in Saskatchewan. He's holidaying in Kenosee Lake. Carnduff is his home town and my home town originally. And Craig is in Regina on business for the day.

Craig is in the water resource management business in Alberta. He's the general manager of the western irrigation district. And he previously was the manager with the eastern irrigation district in Alberta. So he spent many years in the irrigation business. In fact, he's one of

the key players in Alberta in the irrigation field.

So I would like to extend my welcome to Craig and ask members to join me in extending our welcome to the House. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 61 — An Act to amend The Residential Tenancies Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me today is Susan Amrud, a Crown solicitor with the Department of Justice; and Ted Madill who is the Rentalsman.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a few questions that I'd like to pose to you today in committee on this. They're not too lengthy. And I guess if we get the appropriate answers, we can probably move right along on this particular item.

Why, Mr. Minister, did you find it necessary to eliminate the Rent Appeal Commission?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, the prime consideration here was cost savings, was efficiencies. And we have attempted to revamp the program in such a way that we can continue to provide the service that we think is essential while cutting all the costs that we could.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, I fully understand the necessity to establish budgets, be on track with the fiscal reality of the day. And I'm sure that either later today or tomorrow sometime, the Minister of Finance will be back before this Assembly with another interim supply Bill — the third or fourth since this Assembly came together — and he will be telling us about his measures to stay on the budget.

There's a lot of criticism starting to mount, Mr. Minister, that your government's single focus on fiscal matters is to the detriment of some areas in society. Certainly the whole area of the Rent Appeal Commission and the things that have gone with it — and I believe that was even established under a former NDP government in the 1970s if I'm not wrong — was that there needed to be some monitoring service that would give assurances to individuals, particularly in rapid inflationary and price-rising times, that there would be some stability.

And I would like the minister to outline the process of monitoring a little more for the committee so that we would feel more assurance that budget management isn't poor people-management.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, the changes to the Act, as I have already said, are meant to streamline the operations of the office and thereby to achieve cost savings while trying to maintain the main elements of the program, that is, the elements that are most needed by

and in demand by the tenants and the landlords of this province.

We have, among other things in the Bill, attempted to simplify the procedure for resolving security deposit disputes. We have removed the requirement for a Rentalsman officer to investigate every complaint. Instead we will have a hearing within the commission in respect of such cases. The Rent Appeal Commission has been eliminated, as the member has already noted. And appeals from orders made following these hearings that I've described will go to the courts.

We're comfortable with that because under the previous procedure, the order of the Rentalsman was made after an investigation, and if one of the parties wasn't satisfied to it, they could then go the Rent Appeal Commission which did hold a hearing. The difference here is that the hearing is held at the first stage. So the order that is made following that hearing is of a different order than previously, where the order was made following an investigation rather than a hearing. So we've kind of combined those two ideas into one process.

(1530)

However all of that's subject to an appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench. All of the rent review and the rent control provisions are repealed. That is certainly a significant change in the Act. At the time — and the member's quite right — these provisions were enacted in the 1970s. They were enacted, the member may recall, as part of the national anti-inflation program at the time and at a time when rents were leaping ahead and where there was quite a demand for apartment space. And as part of the attempts to control inflation at the time, rents were controlled on a nation-wide basis, and Saskatchewan was required to participate and do its share.

That situation has not been with us for some time. Rents are stable; in some areas they've even fallen. And the supply of apartments and other rental living accommodation is favourable. There's lots of space for rent and there's no need to have this kind of rent review and rent control in the present economy.

Who knows what tomorrow may bring. The situation may change and if that's the case, some future legislature may decide to respond to it.

I might mention that the landlords and the tenants who have disputes have the alternative of taking their disputes directly to the Court of Queen's Bench rather than to the Rentalsman's office. And in addition to that there are a number of housekeeping amendments in the Act.

But that generally describes the new regime that is being proposed to the legislature in this Bill.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, you and I both agree that the prudent monetary moves of the present federal Tory government are far sounder than what we had under a Liberal government in the '70s, but be as it may, you and I won't argue that point any further.

Mr. Minister, how many jobs will be lost as a result of the

elimination of the Rent Appeal Commission and staff?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, the changes to the program will enable us to eliminate 14.5 positions.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, will the Office of the Rentalsman now require additional staff to handle the shift of responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, Mr. Chairman, there will be . . . this will leave us with nine employees in the program and that will be enough to perform the job that has to be done here.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, would you explain to the Assembly the reason behind a base-rent figure and the fact that it will no longer be there — how that will impact, say, on the rental market in the city of Regina.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We have had very few applications or complaints with respect to the level of the rent. The commission hasn't been asked to review rents or rent increases in many cases at all. The vacancy rate is relatively high all across the province and the rents, as I mentioned earlier, are stable. In fact in some areas they've actually decreased, and so there's just no pressure on that side of the program at all, and it hasn't been necessary for the commission to intervene and, in effect, set any base rents. The market is setting the rent and there are no complaints and the commission just hasn't had to intervene and deal with it.

Mr. Swenson: — I wonder, Mr. Minister, just for clarification, what was the last base-rent figure that was used in the province of Saskatchewan?

While you're at it, Mr. Minister, I think there's a couple more officials that must belong to you that are in the back of the House. I'm not sure. If they're not yours, then they shouldn't be here.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, with the leave or concurrence of the House, these are officials who are present for the next two Bills that will be heard. So if there's no objection, they could stay. They are all officials of the Department of Justice.

Now as to your question, just give me a moment to consult with my official. There is no number of general applications that applies on the rental market for the reason that the rental for apartments varies widely from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and block to block and apartment to apartment depending upon the size of the apartment and the quality of the rental accommodation and the location and that sort of factor. So that we don't have a number we can give to the hon. member in . . . as a base-rent figure.

Where these cases arise, it is . . . there would normally have been a rent increase which the tenant does not feel is justified, and in those circumstances the office would do an investigation and do a survey of the market — the market with respect to that particular kind of apartment — or try and find the close parallels and determine what is the norm; or perhaps to use the member's term, what is

the base rent in those circumstances, although that's not a term that I would use, but that doesn't mean much.

The fact is, as I've told the member, that there hasn't been much activity in this area at all in recent years because of the housing market and the availability of rental accommodation. So in short, I can't answer the member's question.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, we'll take you at your word on that.

Mr. Minister, why was the 12-month rate increase period taken out of the Bill?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I believe the member is referring to the provisions that have to do with rent control. My information is that the rent control provisions were actually suspended. Their operation was suspended in 1983 and the office moved to the system of rent review that I have been referring to. So we haven't been using the concept.

It is relevant, though, in the sense that rent increases have occurred every 12 months . . . or not more than once every 12 months. So that figure has retained some relevance under the legislation as it presently stands. As I said earlier, we are in this Bill just simply repealing all of the rent control provisions and the rent review provisions and we'll just allow the market to set the level of the rents.

Mr. Swenson: — So in other words, Mr. Minister, the same reason would apply then. There was a provision in the Bill that had a maximum amount of rent increase that was there. And you're saying that that also would be included then with the 12-month proviso and they'd all be taken out with that.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's right, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, the way I read this, and I'm not the individual responsible for this particular critic position as you can appreciate, but it seems to me upon looking at this, that there will be a one-month time lapse after the time of proclamation where an appeal won't be allowed. And I find that strange that that time lag would be in there where something in 30 days after proclamation could really happen to somebody and they won't have an appeal process in place.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That is a very good point, Mr. Chairman. And the department saw that point after the Bill was printed. And the way in which we're going to resolve that is to proclaim the appeal part of the Bill immediately, and that will be the way around the problem.

Mr. Swenson: — So you don't . . . What you're saying, Mr. Minister, you don't need a House amendment of any kind to cover off the legalities. You can stagger proclamation of various clauses in the Bill and get by with that. That's what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's right. It's not a perfect solution but it'll work. So that's what we'll be doing.

The Chair: — Can members agree to proceed through the Bill on page-by-page basis? Agreed.

Page 1 agreed to.

Pages 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1545)

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to thank the minister and his officials for their answers in this particular area, and hope that everything goes well.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I also would like to thank the officials for coming today and assisting me and the House in this process.

Bill No. 63 — An Act to amend The Ombudsman Act

The Chair: — Would the minister introduce the officials that are with him.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce Andrea Seale, a Crown solicitor with the Department of Justice, who will be assisting me today.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in reviewing this particular Bill, one thing that has come to light that I think is an important matter for the Assembly to deal with is the question of how the Ombudsman's total impartiality is dealt with by this legislature.

And one thing that was very evident to me sitting on the government side, was that whenever this topic of the Ombudsman came up in the past that the then NDP opposition always had a lot to say about the Ombudsman and his role in society and government and his independence from the government — that it simply wasn't strong enough, that we should look at ways and alternatives to further that.

I noticed in your first stab at the Ombudsman's role in relationship to this Assembly and how he governs himself, that there is one thing that I would have assumed would have been there, and that was the ability of the Assembly to set the Ombudsman's budget rather than a particular minister. That it would be this legislative body here that would be the sole determining factor as to how much money and staff and time and all those things that the Ombudsman would have in order to perform his duties properly; that that true independence, if you will, that I often heard spoken about by New Democrats, would have been in this Bill. And I don't find it there.

I would like the minister to sort of give me some reasons, given all of the rhetoric over the years, why this is absent from this particular piece of legislation.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, this is a very important question and a serious one, and one that we discussed and debated for quite some time as we were preparing this legislation and as we were

discussing it through the various steps in the process internal to government. And the question is the broader question than the Ombudsman, because there are other agencies in respect of which much the same argument can be made.

There are very forceful arguments that can be made in support of the member's suggestion and I acknowledge that. And for the time being we have decided to leave it where it has been but not for any particularly cogent reasons either, Mr. Chairman. Rather we are, I think, a bit uncertain about how these can be worked, and I think we're in need of some more work and probably some consultation with members opposite to work out a format or a process for setting budgets.

Having said that, I realize that the Assembly has experience in setting budgets for officers and functions that now fall within the purview of the legislature and where the budgets are set outside the normal government process. And we're conscious of that. But just at this point we didn't feel ready to make the step. And we'd like to have some time to reflect on it and to do some more work on it and, as I mentioned, some consultations with members opposite and determine whether we are all agreed that this would be a good step to take or not.

We also want to have that discussion, as I mentioned earlier, in a wider context involving other agencies where the arguments that the hon. member has in support of this position could be made with equal force.

So what I'm saying to the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, is that we regard this as a proper subject for further discussion and consultation, and we'll be following up on that in the months to come.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I appreciate your consultative mood. I can assure you that the 10 members of the official opposition have consulted amongst themselves. And as you will now see by the House amendment given to your official, we have felt strongly enough about it that we've deemed it appropriate on this particular piece of legislation to bring in a House amendment, check with the legislative Law Clerk, make sure that we had everything in order.

And I have checked with some of the *Hansard* from the past, and there are enough New Democrats sitting in the Chamber today who have voiced concern in the past about this that if they added their votes to the 10 votes of the members of the official opposition, I'm sure this House amendment would pass, at least reading from the record of their past comments in this particular area. And I give the assurance to the minister that with the passage of this amendment you would see the official opposition being very diligent and co-operative with the minister in setting the budgetary process. Perhaps we would set some precedents that these other areas of contention that the minister referred to could also be solved.

I know there are some legislative things that the auditor would like to have handled that would change his role in life a little bit, and we're more than prepared to discuss those along with other areas of officers of the Assembly. I'm sure the minister, he may want to point out to me, why

this sudden change in your views? Well I quite frankly never made any on the record. I made sure I checked that before I came into this Assembly and talked about this.

But one thing is true. None of us can deny the public expectation and public perception of how this place operates has changed fairly dramatically in the last few years. And, Mr. Minister, this whole idea of co-operation and consultation with the opposition is great, but we've unfortunately just gone through a stage in this Assembly where the rules of this Assembly were changed unilaterally for the very first time in our history.

And that doesn't bode well for your commitment to me that on this particular item you're going to sort of seek a lot of opinion on how things are going to be done because all I've got to go on is some past experiences that I find rather bitter recently, and that doesn't give me a lot of assurance. And that's why I am bringing forward today this particular House amendment that seems to me to cover off comments of members of this Assembly for at least the last half-dozen years in a fairly strong way. And I say to you, Mr. Minister, this is a darn good place to start.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I can only say to the member that when I say that I would like to consult with the opposition, that means that I would like to consult with the opposition, and I will consult. And there's just no question or two ways about that.

I am conscious as I have this discussion across the floor with the member, that our own democratic reform paper was quite clear on the matter, and the member has captured the essence of that in his proposed House amendment. I tried to indicate to the member that it was a close call as far as we were concerned and that we had considerable discussions about it and just felt that we weren't in a position to make the plunge. Probably that expresses the move too strongly, Mr. Chairman, but we just weren't prepared to take the step.

And if the member requires a response to the amendment right now, then I would be bound by the decision that we had already made not to take this step at this time, but rather to refuse the House amendment at the moment, but make it clear to the member that this is not an open subject and that we want to consider it further, and we want to have a direct and meaningful discussion with the opposition with respect to how this kind of a system would work.

Now if the member is prepared to accept that assurance and not put the House amendment, we can proceed. If the member would prefer to do it though, we could adjourn the House's consideration of this Bill while we, on our side, review the amendment, which I have just seen now for the first time, and come back to this at another day.

So can I toss the ball back to the member, Mr. Chairman, and see how he would like to handle this.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Minister, I appreciate the spot that you're in. And I am more than willing to say, why don't we set this particular piece of legislation aside to let sober second thought take

place and maybe we can move forward in a manner that is appropriate to all sides and we get on with this.

I think of all the areas, Mr. Minister, where we have this particular type of decision to make that this one is probably the easiest to bring about, rather than some of the other ones which have larger budgetary ramifications tied to them and are tougher points to deal with than this one would be. So I'm quite willing to adjourn this one until a future date, Mr. Chairman.

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I'll just recap what I understand has passed between the member and I. The member has proffered a House amendment, which I have danced around about and volunteered to the member that we would be prepared to defer further consideration of this Bill by committee until another day to give the government an opportunity to consider the House amendment which he has just put.

Now as to how one accomplishes that within the rules of the House, I'm unclear. But I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to accommodate the understanding that he and I have just reached.

Mr. Martens: — On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, would the Clerk inform the chairman and then provide for us an answer to the question that the minister raised and we'll proceed in that fashion.

The Chair: — Well if that's the case, then the minister can simply move that the committee report progress on the Bill.

The committee reported progress.

Bill No. 65 — An Act to amend The Homesteads Act, 1989

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce the officials that are with him.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again I have with me Susan Amrud, a Crown solicitor with the Department of Justice; and Greg Hebert, the manager of administration in the property registration branch in the department.

Clause 1

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, would the minister please advise the Assembly about the context of the Bill, and then I will see whether I have some questions about it.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. The amendments will eliminate the requirement that the Land Titles officers ensure compliance with The Homesteads Act. Now the Act will still continue to operate and still be in full force and effect but it will be up to the people preparing the documents, to the vendors, to ensure that the consent of the non-owning spouse and that the certificates are properly completed, and the onus will fall on them and it will no longer be a requirement that Land Titles Office officials analyse these documents and

ensure compliance.

Along with those provisions, the member will have noticed that in the event that anything goes wrong, the parties have access to the assurance fund under The Land Titles Act, and their right to take action is also clarified in the Bill.

But at the heart of the matter is the simple change where officials in the Land Titles Office will not have to check every document for compliance with The Homesteads Act. That will become a private obligation.

Mr. Martens: — I have just one question. I know that in dealing with a number of issues as it relates to The Homesteads Act, there were a number of concerns raised by lenders in the fact that the Farm Ownership Board had . . . or maybe it's the Farm Land Security Board. I'll tell you what the problem is and then you maybe identify whether it's in here. If it's not, that's fine.

It deals with the capacity of individuals to assign after the fact a new homestead under The Homesteads Act, and that has created a problem of some significance. And the various kinds of lenders have approached me as I was a minister and also as a member, that it causes a great deal of problems in two areas, probably one where the credit unions are involved and the other one where Ag Credit is involved. And I was wondering if the minister would respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The situation that the member refers to, Mr. Chairman, is not dealt with in this Bill. It will be dealt with in another Bill that will be before the House in this session.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Bill can proceed then.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Assembly, I'd like to thank the officials for coming to help us today.

Bill No. 68 — An Act to amend The Education Act

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to introduce on my left the deputy minister of Education, Arlene Hynd, and seated directly behind her is Michael Littlewood.

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the minister would mind explaining to the House just what the purpose for these amendments to The Education Act are.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the purpose of the amendments before the House today will be to clarify the provisions that are required to be followed by school boards in the event of the closure of a school, a whole school, or the discontinuance of a grade or grades.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, does not the Act also apply to copyright?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, sorry. There's a second aspect which applies to the copyright provisions, and they are designed to bring our provincial legislation in line with some new federal legislation in this respect which is designed to assure that compensation is paid to the authors and publishers of copyright material.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Who have you been receiving requests from to make these changes to The Education Act?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in respect of the copyright, this is a serious concern in that the school boards in the province and individual schools and teachers know that there is a requirement under the federal copyright legislation to provide for licensing, and it's very cumbersome for each individual or each board to enter into those agreements on their own. So the intent of the legislation is for the province to provide an umbrella agreement on behalf of boards and teachers and users of copyright material in the education system.

So we are being requested by those interested groups to amend our legislation to fall in line with the federal requirements.

In the case of the provisions relating to school closures, we have a number of examples where cases have gone before the courts. In fact the court last year, when they issued an injunction in the Govan situation, made it temporary and reserved their decision until early in 1992 and stated that the reason they had difficulty rendering a decision was because of lack of clarity in the Act — which certainly made it incumbent upon us as legislators to amend the Act to provide the clarity that the court would need and the clarity that the education community, school boards, parents, and students would require so that it would be perfectly clear what the role of each should be in this kind of a decision.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Who have you consulted with concerning both of these portions to your amendments — the copyright part and the school closures?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there have been extensive consultations with the school trustees association, with the teachers' federation, with the league of administrators and directors of the school system, and we have assurance that they all support the provisions of the copyright section.

And as I noted when I spoke to the Bill on second reading, there are some diversity of opinions with respect to the school closure provisions, but we feel that we have found a middle ground which is practical, reasonable, and clear.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. On the copyright section of the amendments, how exactly will that work? Will the schools, the institutions in question, send their money for that copyright to the person who receives the copyright, or will it go to the department and then on to you? You will send that on to whomever.

(1615)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the mechanics of this process would be that the institution or the board would keep track of those materials that are used that would be subject to the fee. They would report that amount to us. We would pay it on their behalf to Can Copy, and then we would take that amount, with their agreement, off the top of the third-party funding when the granting is done.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is there any requirement at the present time for keeping track of what copyrighted materials they have used and report to the department?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question, that is a reason for this legislation, is that really no one is supposed to make use of or duplicate copyright material without meeting the express terms of the copyright. So technically now there hasn't been a reason to do it because it was the responsibility of the user.

What we want to do is to make sure that the users in the education system do provide the compensation to the author or publisher wherever it's appropriate, which Can Copy will determine. But that it be simplified in that it be done under a single, licensed agreement with the Department of Education acting as an agent, which would save a great deal of administrative effort at local levels.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. How do you determine at each individual school, institution, university, how much has been used of copyright material and how much is owing? Do they have to keep a very extensive list of each author, or is there some other mechanism?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we don't know the answer to that because there hasn't been a monitoring system because it was incumbent upon each individual or each institution to take care of these arrangements, and we were not an agent. But now the new legislation will make the users party to an agreement, and we estimate it to be about half a million dollars a year — and that's an estimate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, this will then be an additional cost burden to the entire school system, universities, colleges. Will there be any remunerations from the provincial government to make up for that additional cost to the education system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it will certainly be a saving in the long run because that is the reason that individuals and institutions copy material, is so that they won't have to buy the originals. So copying — and even

though there is a cost to meeting the terms of the copyright — will be cheaper than buying original materials, which is technically what they should have done up until now if they weren't compensating . . . fulfilling the requirements of the copyright.

With respect to will we . . . I guess what your question is, if I can interpret it is, is will the province increase third-party grants to that extent? And I guess the reply to that is that we recognize the importance of education, but we will have to, within the fiscal requirements we have, we will fund them to the extent reasonably possible, but we also have to obey the law.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I agree that it's very important that people with intellectual property rights receive their fair due when that property is used on the behalf of others. And so we will support that part of your amendment. However, I do have a concern that when it comes to the actual costs, I'm sure that most of these institutions have indeed been using originals, but in some cases perhaps that has not been the case.

So in those cases there will be an additional cost to the institution involved. And if they have to take the money out of some other part of their budget to pay for that, that's going to mean there's going to be harm caused in some other area, either something less for students or less teachers or less educational material.

So I would hope, Madam Minister, that you would give some due consideration to the fact that there would be a need there for perhaps some additional funding once this Bill comes into enforcement.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response, all I can say is that we will certainly attempt, within the fiscal realities that we face, to fund education to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, I'd like to move on now to clause 4 of the Bill relating to school closures. And I have a concern with (b), section (u) or subsection (u) in this where it talks about the closures of schools or discontinuance of grades that are not in school districts. And who would have the authority therefore to close that school or to discontinue grades in that school? And when it comes time to discuss with the people of the area, who would you talk with?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the question about what would happen in the case of a school that was not part of a school district, there are not, in proportion, a great number of examples of this situation. But the Act does not apply to those schools now. It always has applied, these provisions have always applied, only to where there is a board.

What would happen in the case of a school situated outside of a district would be that there would be . . . there might be an advisory board. If failing an elected board that represents that school entity, there would be the same requirement to go to the electors of the district.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, would you have any examples of that kind of a school? I can't think of

any personally.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can't think of any other examples except the large urban school boards. If there are some that the hon. member has in particular that he would like to bring to my attention, I could address those.

But I think in general it would apply to the urban school boards. And they do have, although they don't fall under these provisions of the Act, they have policy statements developed by their boards that outline the procedures that they would follow, which usually would include such things as public meetings and consultations within the community.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, thank you, Madam Minister. That clears it up in my own mind, just what kind of schools you're talking about here.

In part (u.1)(i) of the amendments here, you talk of boards of trustees or local advisory committees to school districts. Just what types of boards are you talking about here? Are you talking the local small school district as you would find out in the rural areas, as opposed to a school division board?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, yes. We're saying that when we talk about the board of trustees, we're talking about the division board, or the local school advisory committee, or the local board of the trustees — however you would want to define that. And I think that is the definition that you're looking for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, there are a number of schools around the province that are already in the process of closing and their communities are attempting to keep those schools open. What effects will these amendments have on that process?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, what we have done here, or attempted to do, as I outlined in my remarks on second reading, was in the old legislation . . . Let's look at the existing legislation. It requires six months notice from the time of action. And what the court found was, that action was not really defined.

So what happened, what could happen potentially, is that a division board could meet and make a decision to close a school, notify the people affected by registered letter, giving them six months notice. That placed that people who were affected in a defensive position because the decision had already been taken.

So what we hope to do in this legislation . . . And in most cases school division boards are very responsible, and they do consult throughout the community. And when there's a notice given, a formal notice of closure, it's usually not a total surprise. And it's very hard to provide legislation to cover a situation that might arise when most boards are very responsible.

But in the event that a school board did not consult, then it placed the people that were affected in a difficult position. We wanted to create a situation where the consultation would take place before the decision so that

if there were alternatives that could be sought that would be more acceptable to the community than the closing of the school or discontinuing of the grade, that that could be looked at in a consultative process before the decision.

So now what we have is a situation proposed in our amendment that would require notice to be given at a public meeting. There is about, well, 10 days notice of the meeting. At the meeting the school board would tell to the electors, would tell the electors in the affected area, that they were contemplating this decision. So it's assumed that the consultations and the consideration of viable alternatives would start to happen then.

At least three months then would have to elapse between the holding of that meeting and the actual decision being taken. Then following the decision, another three months would have to elapse before the school was really closed or the grade was discontinued. So the total time frame is really still six months, as provided for in the existing legislation — or a little longer than six months actually because of the notice that has to be given of the meeting first.

And I think what we do have to bear in mind is that in all cases these are minimums. It is to be hoped that school boards would have a much longer time frame for their planning than these minimums. But at least with this amendment in place, it would be clear to everyone exactly what the minimums were and what actions have to be taken. And the consultation would happen prior to the decision.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess the question of responsibility or being responsible depends on which side of the fence you're sitting when it comes to a school closure. I can think of a number of school closures that occurred in our area where the school board made the decisions and came and informed the local electorate. And yet the local electorate, even though they had the six months warning — they had a number of meetings — did not feel that the unit board was being responsible in the closing of their school. So it's all a matter of where you're sitting on it.

In the Act, is there anything in there that allows the electorate, the public affected, to have any influence or any effect on the decisions of the unit board?

(1630)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the only provision . . . it's a self-regulating provision, if you like, because the directors of a school board are duly elected by the people that they represent.

Just take the scenario where they have this public meeting that the electors have been notified of, the people who would be affected by any decision that the school board might take. And the school board, being duly elected members facing their voters, would tell those people that this was a decision they were contemplating — to close their school or discontinue a grade.

If those electors then could suggest reasonable, viable alternatives like alterations to a school, like a willingness

to do something different, and if they told the school board that they thought the action that they were contemplating was unreasonable or irresponsible, then surely those board members, as being responsible and in recognition of their responsibility to the people that elected them, would take those remarks and those suggestions into account and perhaps their final decision — and that's certainly the intent of the legislation — that their final decision would be taken in light of those comments and representations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, we are in a political arena here, but politics is not limited to the legislature and politics plays a large part also on school boards. I know of a number of concerned communities where they have had meetings with their local school board, and you've mentioned that if the local school boards go against the wishes of that local electorate they have the opportunity to replace that school board — the unit board. But in the cases of some small communities, they do not have enough political clout to in fact do that.

Therefore what happens is that a division board, for purposes of its own which may not have anything to do in fact with financial but rather with political considerations and with opportunities for their communities, will close a school, a small school, when that community does not wish it to happen. And they have in some cases some very good reasons why it should not happen. Yet it does happen because of the politics involved in the situation.

I know of five or six schools around the province right now that have contacted me with concerns because either they're closing their school or they're losing grades out of their schools. The people in the community feel that there is absolutely no reason for that to happen, that their school is well maintained, that it has the structure capable to do that; whereas the school that they are going to perhaps does not have the proper facilities. And yet because of some political considerations by some boards and some board members, those schools will be closed or those grades will be lost.

So under this Act, those communities do not have an opportunity of any redress. Their only opportunity comes three years down the road when you have your general elections for the school boards, for your local division board. If those communities do not have the political clout, they can't do anything about it. So you continue to amalgamate schools, small schools into a larger community, to the detriment of those smaller communities. And they have a real concern about that.

I've received representations from the Qu'Appelle School in the Indian Head-Wolseley school division. I've received representations from the Westmor School up near Prince Albert, from Quill Lakes, from Elbow. All of these schools feel that they have a right to continue to exist. They do not feel that they are receiving proper hearings from their division boards.

And yet in this Act, while you may have a meeting and you may have a two-, three-month period in there, there is still nothing at the end of the day to give those local electorates a real say in what happens to their schools.

They can go to a meeting and say all they want and complain and point out all their alternatives and point out the finances, that it's cheaper to maintain their school than it is to build on to another one, but at the end of the day, if that unit board wants to close their school for whatever reason, it will happen. And the local electorate does not have an opportunity to have a direct say in whether or not their school stays open. And I believe some place in this Act that opportunity should be given.

If the electorate wants to keep that school open in that school district, then perhaps they should also be willing to pay extra to do so. I talked to one of my RM (rural municipality) administrators and asked, is it possible for a school division or for an RM to collect funds for a particular school district within that division? And he said yes, it is. All they would have to do on their tax ledgers is designate it as another division within their RM.

So you could take school district A within division A, and you could collect a separate fee for that tax block represented by that school district. So it is possible to do so. It would take some legislation perhaps, but it is physically possible to make that collection if it was so desired.

If the electorate in that school district where a school was going to be closed wished to maintain their school, wished to pay for it, then I think the opportunity should be provided for them to do so. They could still operate within the division. They could still receive the funding that they would normally receive from the division to maintain that school and that student population, but the additional funds necessary to keep that school open could be raised locally from the local electorate as they have voted in some type of election.

And let the local electorate make the decision. Do I want to keep my school open? Do I want to pay extra to do so? Have you given any consideration to that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I believe that the process that we're outlining in the amendment provides opportunity for that in terms of the public meeting which is required to be held before the decision is taken. And I am aware of some instances where there is a special levy that is collected. This isn't something that we would encourage because there are two corner-stones really in our education system. One is equality of opportunity for all children no matter where they live, and one is equity in taxation within those parameters.

So if there were to be a large number of cases where . . . for instance, the public meeting that was contemplated in the amendment would be held, and the school board would indicate to the electors that they were contemplating closing the school. And the electors said, well look, if it's a financial consideration, we're willing to pay a special levy within this particular school district, which will be collected as a tax, in order to keep this school open.

That's possible. The mechanics are there for it to be done. But if that was a very widespread practice, you would very soon find those districts that were able to sustain an additional tax load versus those who had the same desire

but not the same capacity to pay. And we would be getting away from the equity and taxation that is the corner-stone of our system.

But I think we are providing in the amendments an enhanced opportunity for those kind of discussions to take place prior to the decision. Because the way it is now, if the board takes a decision without consultation . . . and I certainly hope that being responsible elected people that most of them don't; most of them do consult with people and they don't rely on the minimum time frames. But in the event that they do and then someone comes up with a good alternative, it means that the board has to reverse their decision, which is difficult politically.

So we want to turn the process around, make sure that there's adequate provision for consultation before the fact, before the decision is taken. And that's the change that this amendment contemplates.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, you've mentioned that there will be a requirement for public meetings in this amendment. Well public meetings are needed and are very good, but public meetings are not consultation if the board, the unit board, arrives with a closed mind. Rather they're simply there going through the motions to meet the requirements of the Act. And that does happen on the rare occasion where a board has made a determination that they are going to close school X and that's all there is to it.

Your public meetings, the people can come and express themselves. They can have input, but if nobody is listening, it means nothing. And if at the end of that meeting they have no mechanism by which to tell the board that they do not want their school to close or they do not want their grades to be eliminated, there's no mechanism there by which they can put any pressure on the division board to reconsider their decision. Their only pressure is that of the ballot box three years down the road. And in a lot of cases, with the smaller communities and these small schools, their power of the ballot box is very, very limited.

I believe, Madam Minister, that there needs to be some other mechanism in there that will allow the small school districts to have some direct influence on the unit board decisions. And the one mechanism that is there is allow that school district to have a vote, to have a say on what they wish to happen in their school. And not all of that electorate is going to say, keep my school open.

Because I look at what's happening in my own area. There are parents in that area that look at the quality of the education they are going to receive in a smaller school and they say, no, I want something better for my child. So they're prepared to accept the fact that their school may close and their students will be bused some place else. There are other parents who say, no, under any circumstances I do not want my school to close.

But at the end of the day if those parents and that electorate had the opportunity to express themselves in the democratic manner, and then whoever presented the most influential arguments will win in the end. And the community can say, we had a voice in it; we had a

choice. We made the choice and this is what it is. If the choice is to close the school, well fine. If the choice is to keep the school open, then they should also, when they make their vote, cast their ballot, be making the choice that we are prepared to fund the additional amount necessary over and above what the division is already supplying for us.

You talk of equality of opportunity for students. Well if it's the parents' choice that they do not want to expand the opportunity of choice to their students, that they feel that the opportunity of choice in their current situation is what they want, then why are they not allowed to continue with that choice?

And the same with the equality of taxation. If those electorate, the people who pay the taxes, vote to pay a higher amount of taxes, that's their decision. They're paying their original taxation levels into the division, the same as everybody else in the whole division is doing so, but they have agreed to pay an additional amount to provide for their school in the manner that they wish. And I don't see that as eliminating equalities of either opportunities or taxation because those parents have made that particular decision.

Now in some communities, they may have a larger tax base by which to finance that. But that larger tax base is already financing that school to a comparable degree. So I believe there is a real need here, Madam Minister, to take a serious look at this. And I would hope that you can explain why you wouldn't want to, if that is in fact the case.

(1645)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to the special levy or the raising of an extraordinary fund directed at keeping a certain school open, there is no need to make amendments to provide for that, because those mechanisms are already there. And I'm aware of some instances where those kind of special levies within a portion of a school division have been raised and collected by the municipality on behalf of the school division and turned over to them for a specific purpose. So the mechanics of that procedure are already there. So if that was the desire of any school board or part of the electors in part of a division, it's not necessary to address that in The Education Act because the provisions already provide for that.

I think we have to bear in mind at all times when considering this legislation that these provisions are only meant to prevail where there is not consent. There are many schools that are closed and many grades that are discontinued or moved with the consent of the people that are affected, because responsible boards will look at the situation of how to deliver education in their area in the best way with the best outcome for the students. They will normally consult with the people that are affected, take into consideration their views, and consent can be obtained for taking all different kinds of actions to suit the situation.

This legislation is meant to be a safety net, if you like, where consent has not been able to be obtained, but to

provide for a consultation that, if not voluntary, according to the current Act, doesn't have to take place until after this decision is taken. So I think that's one of the reasons why so many of these situations that have developed have become so emotional.

And it is emotional. The small school in our school district closed in 1966, and it was bought as a community centre. And I still get a lump in my throat every time I drive by it. I mean there is just something about a small school. And a great many of the small schools do a really good job. We're not a proponent of bigger is better and we're not a proponent of closing schools. What we do want to provide for is to make sure that there is a consultative mechanism that provides . . . that the people that are affected by the way education is delivered will have a say. And in the amendment we do provide for that.

It's not in the current legislation, not really. It says that after this decision is taken that the board should use the intervening six months to talk to the people that are affected about alternate arrangements. But that's all after the decision is taken. So you can see where people react when they get the notice and they say, well it's too late now, the decision's already been taken.

After the public meeting that's required by the amendment, people have all the recourses that normally they do, like public meetings, petitions, representations to their school board representative. But all this can now take place, with the amendment to the Act, take place before the decision is made and influence and affect the decision, rather than taking place after the decision has been formally taken and communicated.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I agree that there needs to be a process by which the parents and the communities involved have an opportunity to have a say in what is going to happen to their local school, be it the closure or the discontinuation of some grades. I agree 100 per cent. I support that. I've gone through that and it is a very heart-wrenching circumstance when a school is closed. It really divides a community and it divides a school division when that happens. And there needs to be a process by which people can have some input.

But at the end of the day, when you've consulted, but the community has no means to prevent it from going ahead if they do not wish it to proceed, if the unit board is bound and determined that they are going to close that school, then that community needs some other mechanism to prevent that if they so wish. If they consent to close the school, fine. There's no arguments there, and so things can proceed.

But where there is not consent, where the school is closed against the wishes of the community, then there needs to be some mechanism in there for that community to say we want to do something different, and here's what we want to do.

And your amendments do not provide that. They do provide for the consultation. That's very good; that needs to be there. But at the end of the day, the six months plus 10 days is still in effect if the school board wants to close

that school. And those communities do not have . . . they may have said all the words. They may have done all the studies. They may have presented all the arguments that are valid to keep that school open. But at the end of the day if the division is bound and determined to close the school, it will happen because the community has nothing to stop it. And if the community is prepared to pay, I see no reason why they should not be allowed to keep their school open and allow it to proceed as it is.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can only repeat that in the event that finance is the consideration and in the event that a part of a school division wants to raise money for any reason — whether it's to keep a school open, whether it's to build a new one, whether it's to provide some kind of equipment or some kind of access to education that's not provided for across the division — those mechanisms are there. And they are being used from time to time. So we don't have to provide that in the Act because that provision is already there; the mechanisms are there for people to do that if they want to.

And I think that . . . I look back on my history as a municipal representative, as a reeve. If, for example, there was an issue, a zoning bylaw, which would have to be advertised, for instance, then there would be public hearings. As a responsible elected official for a number of years at that level we would listen carefully to the representations that would be made by our constituents in terms of appearances, telephone calls, personal representations, letters, petitions. And if we felt that we were not . . . that what we had contemplated was not acceptable, it wouldn't be done.

So I think that we have to keep in mind that school boards and the directors are duly elected by the people they serve; that with democracy comes responsibility so that people, the electors, must select, when they go to the ballot box, their representatives with care and try to make sure that elected boards are made up of people that will be responsive to their views; that can't always do what they want, but that will provide them with explanations. And in this case, provide the rationale so that consent can be obtained for the actions that the board is contemplating or an alternative that might be presented by someone else, by another elector or group of electors.

And in those cases, this legislation — the either what's in place under 92(u) or the amendments that we're contemplating and proposing — would never have to be used. This is only a safety net in the event that a good and satisfactory conclusion for all parties cannot be reached voluntarily.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, this has been quite an interesting debate that's been going on from our critic to yourself about school closures. And we won't have time for what I want to discuss with you, Madam Minister, in the short time we got left because it's quite important.

The last time you and I discussed our school problem in my constituency concerning the Elbow-Loreburn area, someone from the . . . a member from the legislature — I believe it was the Leader of the Liberal Party — sent out a copy of *Hansard* to some of the people in the Loreburn

area and tried to cause me quite a bit of problem.

But I want it on the record that anything that we're discussing in this here House now, I'll be sending a copy out, about 700 copies of *Hansard*, and they're going to be very interesting to hear in the area when . . . more interested . . . maybe her interference in the Loreburn area, sticking up for the Loreburn School there and then turning around in estimates here the other day saying that she's asking questions for keeping the Elbow School open.

Maybe they'll be more interesting to know when *Hansard* gets out there that every time she votes in this House — not every time, but almost every time she votes — it's the NDP. So that'll show you and the public out there that she's right in the alliance with the NDP-Liberal alliance. That's what . . . they're going to be interested. And she finds out that that's not the kind of thing that people do in this House, to send *Hansards* out to try to cause people a problem.

Anyway, Madam Minister, I agree that this is a very, very serious situation we got in Elbow-Loreburn. And I do believe, Madam Minister, the only way we're going to solve it, we're going to have to ask help from the department. And I believe you're a co-operative minister. And we have . . . And I agree with what you said here a few moments ago that when you drive by the little school that closed years ago that you get a lump in your throat. Well I'm the same way. When I drive by my little town of Aylesbury just where I was born and raised in that community . . . and it was sad when they closed the Aylesbury School to go to Craik School but Aylesbury was a town under a hundred; Craik was about 600 and I could see it happening.

The same thing happened when they closed Girvin School and moved to Davidson. And it is sad. Those are sad situations.

We've got a sad situation just in the Davidson school unit right now where they were building a new school in Kenaston. It's being built now. And they're contemplating closing the Hawarden School and they'll be all going to Kenaston. Hawarden's on the same line, Madam Minister, as I think you're familiar, as Elbow, Loreburn, Strongfield, and then Hawarden, Glenside, and then Outlook. But Hawarden somehow or other it goes into the Davidson school unit and the rest of the towns are all under the Outlook school unit.

Now Hawarden, I was quite proud of the people there. The Hawarden people, they went to their division representative and they just . . . it was almost a year's process. And the school board, the local school board, went to the division board and they had meeting after meeting after meeting and I think there was some . . . because this happened last fall, Madam Minister, where the school unit division board made a vote, had a vote, and decided to keep the Hawarden school open for another year.

So this is coming up next year, either they'll be closing that school or else they'll have to make some arrangements for another year. They're even talking,

Madam Minister, that perhaps Hawarden should go into the Outlook School Division and then in that case if they done something like that then the Strongfield students could be going to Hawarden. There's a real good school in Hawarden and they could perhaps go there and not have this disruption down the line. Because this is a very rare situation that we have there. Usually what we're doing is closing schools to save money.

But closing the Elbow School, which I understand from the documents that I have and that you have, that it'll be closing on June 30, 1993, and that gives them one more year. And, Madam Minister, it doesn't seem right to be closing a larger school with the largest population, to spend money to close a school. In this case we're going to spend money to close the school.

I understand from you and I have your note right here, that it's been passed for \$438,000, I believe it was — I might be a little out — to put a roof on the Loreburn School and two relocateable class-rooms. I understand that's been passed.

And everybody wanted that. Loreburn people wanted that. I was pushing for that over the last year, to repair that roof.

And we knew that the time come when Strongfield School would have to be closed and perhaps moved down to Loreburn. But nobody, nobody ever thought that the time would come when down another seven miles, that the Elbow School, which has a population, the town, of about 375 people, and Loreburn, 170, and 60-some in Strongfield, we never thought that we'd have to fight to keep the Loreburn School open and repair the roof, and do all these things to keep the Loreburn School in good shape. But we never thought we'd have to do it at the expense of the Elbow School.

I'm not blaming anyone in the department at all, except we're going to have the department people . . . we have to have them look into this situation or we're going to have the 400 people that signed a petition — 400-plus — and I tabled in this legislature here some couple of weeks ago, we're going to have a lot of very unhappy people.

And something, Madam Minister, I guess they're looking . . . I didn't realize that the time was here, so I haven't left you much . . . any time to answer. I didn't realize it was almost 5 o'clock.

But I thought I'd give you the outline, Madam Minister, that when we come back onto this Bill and further in estimates, that we have to really get into the details, because there's some real details that you, Madam Minister, need to understand. And I'm sure you'll be willing to listen and help us out. Because I do believe that when you get a scrap that's going on in the community . . . And it's sad that the town of Loreburn, Strongfield, and Elbow, they're fighting among one another. And they're all related and it's sad, and I don't like to see this.

So sometime an outside body like the Department of Education, that's what they're for. We're going to have to have your help for this.

The committee reported progress.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 61 — An Act to amend The Residential Tenancies Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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. 65 — An Act to amend The Homesteads Act, 1989

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.