

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today, Mr. Speaker, I have more petitions concerning the chiropractor treatment in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker:

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 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 in both 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.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today I have four pages. They are from various places in the province. This one here is Tyvan, Pilot Butte, Regina, Swift Current. They’re from all over; it looks like about six different places.

The next one is mostly Saskatoon area, Mr. Speaker.

Biggar, Allan, which is my constituency — several from Allan, the constituency of Arm River. And more from Saskatoon, Perdue, and from Kenaston, which is also my constituency, Mr. Speaker; from Dalmeny.

This page it looks like all Regina; these are all Regina addresses. Some are just signed Regina. This page is so full, Mr. Speaker, that they went beyond the lines right to the bottom of the page. And there’s a couple from Moose Jaw at the bottom of the page, and some from Grand Coulee.

And the last page, Mr. Speaker, is nearly all Regina. And of course I left this page to the last because this is where Churchill Downs addresses are on this page. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions today to lay before the Assembly, and I’ll only read the prayer part because my colleague from Arm River has indicated what the petitions are about today:

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have people on my petitions from Saskatoon, a whole page here from Saskatoon; Regina, Fort Qu’Appelle, Lemberg, Qu’Appelle, Dysart, Southey, Indian Head, Wolseley, Regina, Cupar, Balcarres, obviously Lebret — people from all over southern Saskatchewan — and the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, who have a great deal of trouble with what’s happening in this particular area.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will be tabling petitions with respect to chiropractic care. I’ll just summarize with the last sentence and then inform the House where most of these names are from.

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.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I have people here, about 50 names, Mr. Speaker — people from Estevan, Carievale, Frobisher, Macoun, Roche Percee, people from Prince Albert and district, a page of those, and two pages of people from Saskatoon

and Martensville, Mr. Speaker.

I'll now table these petitions.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure as well to join with my colleagues in presenting petitions to this Assembly, petitions that have been sent in from people from the northern part of the province again, as well, asking the government to reconsider their actions regarding chiropractic services and pray that they would give serious consideration to their actions.

The petitions come in from Saskatoon, a number signed from P.A. (Prince Albert), and a number of communities in the northern part of the province — Candle Lake, Mr. Speaker, Tessier, Meath Park, and Grandora, Weldon, and Melfort.

Mr. Speaker, I humbly present these to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have several petitions I'd like to table today. And as the prayer has been read once or twice, I'll bypass that.

These petitions too, Mr. Speaker, are from various parts of the province, and they are to do with the chiropractic treatment of patients. They're all the way from Weyburn, Saskatoon, Radville. They cover the province pretty well, and there's several — Bromhead, Radville . . . And I present them.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to present a number of petitions from petitioners who are concerned about chiropractic care in the province of Saskatchewan. I have individuals here from Saskatoon, Landis, Waldheim, Martensville, Balcarres, Fort Qu'Appelle, Kelliher, Cupar, Leross, Lipton, North Battleford, Yorkton, Leoville, and Spiritwood.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to present a number of petitions to the Assembly today, dealing with the chiropractic care. These petitioners have underlined one sentence in here that they thought was particularly important:

. . . 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.

And the people who have signed this, Mr. Speaker, are from around the province — Regina, Saskatoon, Delisle, Warman, Frobisher, Torquay, Alameda, Estevan, Carievale, Bienfait, Stoughton, Lake Alma, Macoun, Yorkton, Steelman, Carnduff, and Forget. I present these petitions to the House.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to present petitions today on behalf of the residents of Saskatchewan. The main paragraph, just to outline the need:

Wherefore the 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.

And as in duty bound, your petitions will ever pray.

These come from the towns of Hazel Dell, Togo, the city of Regina, Glenavon, White City, Balgonie, Yorkton, Springside, Kelliher, Langenburg, Saskatoon, Pelly, Kamsack, Preeceville, Canora, Veregin, Invermay, Sturgis, and Churchbridge. And I have several, several pages of these to present today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to deinsure optometric services.

Of farmers and citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to allow the 1991 GRIP program to stand for this year.

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying 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.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the rest of the Assembly through you, a person who I believe has a unique association with the Assembly. The father of Judy Gerich, wife of the former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) John Gerich, and of course my father, Robert Renaud, who is seated near the front entrance here.

The spirit of Saskatchewan politics of course is not only very evident in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, but it's quite evident at family reunions in our family. And of course without the advantage of having a Mr. Speaker like yourself, sir, as a referee.

I would ask the Assembly to please welcome my father.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, Robert Hawkins and his son,

Collin, who are sitting in the west gallery. Robert is the president and CEO (chief executive office) of Del-Air Systems in Humboldt, which is the major shareholder in Bay Trail Steel. And he's down doing some business today, and I'd like all members to welcome him to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to GRIP

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday all our worst fears about this government and what it would do to 60,000 farm citizens has been confirmed by the introduction of your GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) Bill. Your GRIP will void actions taken and deny farmers their legitimate right to the judicial process.

Can the minister continue to claim . . . how can the minister continue to claim that he represents farmers and then allow them . . . or deny them, the access to the court or their day in court.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should be aware, as I outlined in the House yesterday, that we have introduced changes to the GRIP program consistent with the recommendations of a broadly representative committee, a committee that the member opposite himself praised in his talk just a few days ago, and it is in representing farmers in that fashion that we've brought forward the new GRIP legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, everyone knows changes to the GRIP were necessary. But everyone also knows that breaking your word is wrong. And to ask legislators in this Assembly to sanction your untruth is also wrong.

Mr. Minister, will you not admit that one of the main reasons for your Bill is directly targeted at those farmers who have taken you to court so as to cancel any case they may have against you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I can say that the allegation of the member opposite is not true. The purpose of this legislation is to clarify in legislation things which were very unclear in the fashion in which the legislation was originally constructed.

It would be very difficult to have any farmer define the program that they were in last year from any formal papers designed by the members opposite. And it is in the new design, that in the legislation and in the regulations that will follow, that the farmers will have a full description of the GRIP program as it applies to them in 1992.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, isn't it true that you are so paranoid about losing the case that you are using the ultimate club of a Bill in this Legislative Assembly to destroy those farmers and their legal case. Is not that the reason why you're doing it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, there is no club being used in this legislation. What this legislation very simply does, in addition to implementing the new provisions of the new GRIP agreement, is to remove the requirement for an unworkable notice provision that was in the context of the federal-provincial agreement, an impossibility to work around because the federal-provincial agreement provides for a mechanism for changing programs inconsistent with the very rigid deadline issue the member opposite refers to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, everyone knows that without this legislation you would lose in court. And in fact you, as a minister, would have had to testify and defend your indefensible actions. Would the minister not admit that the real reason for this unacceptable contract-breaking legislation is that you are personally afraid to testify in court?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite I think by now ought to be aware that I am willing to engage in any discussion with anyone about any issue around this matter at any time. The provisions in the new legislation have to do with the implementation of a GRIP program. They have to do with the clarification of carelessly constructed rules, unworkable rules by the members opposite — rules that in fact the members opposite themselves ignored repeatedly over the last number of years and last year again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, those same rules apply in Alberta and Manitoba, and nobody complains there, Mr. Minister. You were afraid, Mr. Minister, you were actually afraid that you might actually have to tell the truth in court. And isn't that the reason why you are afraid to go to court on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the provisions of the new program, as designed by the farmer committee — I will repeat again, as the members opposite praised the other day — were to do away with some serious errors in the design of the original program, errors which encouraged farming practices which are inconsistent with the best management for farms, costs for a program that are unbearable by the taxpayers, a process that was unworkable. And the new legislation provides for a clarification of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister, will you tell this Assembly whether you are breaking contracts with this legislation in the province of Saskatchewan with 60,000 farmers?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand the nature of the question of the member opposite. The fact is that the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I've been listening very carefully, and there's too much interruption when the minister is answering. I ask the members to please . . . If you want answers, let's not interrupt. Let the minister answer.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I fail to recognize the nature of the question of the member opposite. If he is raising the question of the deadline, I've indicated that the legislation provides for the removal of the requirement for the rigid deadline and replaces it with a more workable, adequate notice provision — a provision that we actually respected ourselves this year in giving notice on March 13, and giving farmers originally until April 30 and then till May 15 and later to July 20, to understand and respond to the program. The member opposite is aware that the Conservative . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, if you aren't saying in that legislation that you're breaking the contract with 60,000 farmers, why are you making everything done prior . . . or after 1991, January 1, 1991, void? Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is now on to the subject of retroactivity, I had our officials do a little bit of research into the record of the members opposite. In the period of 1986 until 1991, the members opposite passed 70 — seven, zero — 70 independent pieces of legislation, all with retroactive provisions. So if that's the concern, I think you're being hypocritical.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, by that very statement, Mr. Minister, you are admitting that you are going retroactive in this legislation back to January 1, 1991. Is that for the purposes, Mr. Minister, of breaking the contract with farmers in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to understand that it is no great revelation to read from his document that there is a retroactive provision relative to notice, which I have already discussed with the member opposite relative to the reasons for it. It was in fact . . . the fact that it was an unworkable provision, an unworkable provision that under the crop insurance program the members opposite never respected, and under the GRIP program the members opposite began, they never respected. And it was in fact an unworkable provision.

I remind the members opposite that not only were there 70 pieces of legislation in the period '86 to '91 that were retroactive, that doesn't deal with the ones from your first term of office, including the land bank legislation, nor the matter on which you did not . . . the members opposite did not legislate, which was on the matter of the mortgage protection plan where by press release you changed the rights of home owners in Saskatchewan and required us to make legislative changes later.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, is it not true that the real reason, the real reason for the legislation, is so that you, the Premier, and the Minister of Justice will not have to be called before the court in the public of Saskatchewan to tell the truth?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I could repeat the answers around the question of notice that the member asks, and I will if he continues to ask the question.

I want to say to the member opposite that he is certainly out of touch with the farming community if he believes that the question of whether they had two months notice in order to understand and accept the program was enough notice relative to the two weeks provided for in the document that the member refers to. That's not the concern of farmers. They had adequate contact, they had adequate information. The member opposite, if he were in touch with the farmers, would understand that income . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Before I allow the next question I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition he has now interrupted about six times since question period started. I've asked the members to please let the minister answer and let the member ask his question.

Mr. Martens: — My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you said on June 23 in the *Star-Phoenix*, it's reported:

"I worry about contracts and all of that. I mean, one has certain rights. That's where the merit of the PC walkout is. But we've got that point, and the public has that point, and they can use that to remind the public right up until (the time of) the next election and they can still come back to the legislature."

Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, is it not true that you are going to deny an opportunity in a court of law when you, through the constitutional debate in 1980, '81, and '82, gave constitutional rights to individuals in the province of Saskatchewan both in the charter and in the constitution? And now, sir, your government is denying that right. Is this not true that you are denying the right in court to these individuals who are taking your government to court?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of the

member opposite is astounding when one considers that on the question of a provision to clarify a carelessly constructed piece of legislation that has a retroactive clause within it, that somehow he interprets this into the exaggerated statement that he just made. The fact is that it is from time to time necessary to do that in order to correct the kind of misconstructions the members opposite made.

I want to say that the issue that farmers are really concerned about is their incomes. The member opposite will understand that for 30 years farmers lived with a crop insurance program with which they were reasonably satisfied. Why is it that now when they have an increase in their level of crop insurance coverage, they are facing income shortfalls?

It is because the federal government has not met their requirements with respect to third line of defence. It is because the members opposite and the members opposite in their self-righteousness, will not support the call for that kind of support to solve the income shortfall of farmers in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Premier, you have said over and over in the last few weeks and the months that you have worked on the constitution on the basis of consensus and compromise. My question to you, sir, is this: is this consensus and compromising forcing farmers to go to court against the Saskatchewan government and then turning around and denying them access in the legislature to that court? Is that what the constitution is all about?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite continues to engage in exaggerated rhetoric. The Bill that we introduced yesterday that the members have held up the democratic process for about 60 days for, that Bill simply does away with the requirement for a very strict time line that was repeatedly ignored by the members opposite and that is unworkable in the delivery of farm programming in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, you have on two occasions in the history of Saskatchewan dealt with the constitution. Twice, Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, and twice you have said compromise and consensus is the way to go in this whole issue.

Mr. Premier, it's time for you to address this problem. You have a minister who is bringing to this Legislative Assembly what constitutes an illegal action under the constitution in my opinion and many others. Are you going to continue to stand behind that minister in defending something that is not legitimate in the constitutional debate?

The Speaker: — Order. Before the minister answers, I have now tried to get the member from Humboldt not to intervene at least two or three times. I ask him to please not intervene.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, may I remind the members opposite again that the way in which the changes came forward to this program were as a result, if I may briefly review history, of a program that was slapped together in preparation for an election campaign; that had, by the time I got to my meeting where I learned about the program, change number 95 and number 96 was being made, the changes being made well beyond any March 15 deadline; a program that farmers expressed a great deal of concern about in its implementation and throughout the summer and in the fall, and the members opposite are aware because they avoided the meetings where farmers expressed those concerns; a program that we then followed the legislation for reviewing and established a committee, a committee that heard 300 representations from farmers and farm organizations who recommended these changes to a program which we then implemented in a fashion more disciplined than the original construction of the program. If the members opposite have a concern with that, then I guess they have a concern about good and orderly government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, if you are so sure that this is only about individual contracts within the province of Saskatchewan, why on three occasions in that Bill do you make it so explicit that nobody can take you to court anywhere in the province of Saskatchewan based on the Bill that is being presented? Where do you find in your constitution that right for you to do that against the rights of individuals in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to read the newspaper some time and address the questions of the content of the program that is here. I appreciated that yesterday you would have quoted one of the local journalists in a part of his article, but ignored the part where he said, what is the basic, substantive concern of the members opposite relative to the program?

The members opposite have completely ignored that in favour of playing political games around the issue of deadlines with their friends on an issue that . . . on the issue of deadlines which the members opposite ignored for a number of years before implementing this legislation, and ignored in fact in the implementation of the original program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address this question to the Premier. And I wish the Premier well and all first ministers well on their constitutional debate.

My question is with respect to the line of questioning just carried on by my colleague and the Minister of Agriculture. And I go back to June 23 when we're talking about breaking contracts and people's rights. And I quote, this is the Premier of Saskatchewan, the NDP (New Democratic Party) Leader, Mr. Romanow. And it says: "I worry about contracts . . . This is about GRIP. And it says, quote:

I worry about contracts and all of that. I mean, one has certain rights.

And then the Premier goes on to say:

That's where the merit of the PC walkout is.

Now we have in this legislature, in this particular piece of legislation that we've been debating here for months, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the fear the people might lose their rights, their contract rights. Union contracts are valid. We don't want them broken retroactively. Teachers have contracts, nurses have contracts, health care workers, construction workers.

Is this kind of legislation that we see, that we've been debating here for months, the kind of thing that we could see extended to other contracts? Not just farmers and crop insurance, but could it be extended to unions? Could it be extended to teachers, to nurses, to health care workers, other people throughout the province? Is this something that you believe that you could extend to all forms of society in the province of Saskatchewan now that you've introduced this piece of legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, who asks the question, ought to know the answer to the very question he asks. The provisions in the federal-provincial agreement very clearly describe the circumstances under which changes to the program can be made. It is obvious to the member . . . it ought to be obvious to the member opposite that when one is not unilaterally in charge of program changes, when in fact it requires the consent of a number of provinces and the federal government, that it is impractical to have and unworkable to have a fixed-time deadline around which that then functions.

The members opposite themselves ignored that deadline last year. In fact they had no federal-provincial agreement until September 18 last year. It is in that context that farmers had an agreement with respect to the federal-provincial agreement between Saskatchewan and Ottawa to have a program which could be changed, and it defined the rights of farmers with respect to significant change, that they would then have the right to opt out, opt out of the program.

And the member opposite knows that we provided a very much enhanced opportunity for opting out for farmers who felt these changes were changes that were not changes they wanted to participate in. That is the federal-provincial agreement that the member opposite signed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — My question will go back to the Premier. You can have unions that will continue to work, but they don't have a contract. The contract expired and they've been without a new contract. And it holds, and it continues to hold.

And then in the newspaper article it says . . . and it's just one sentence here, Mr. Speaker.

The (political) stand-off relates to a court action farmers have brought against the government. They were not informed of changes to the GRIP program by March 15, as required.

So the contract was valid. The contract was there. And retroactively now you are going in — and you've admitted it's retroactive — you're going to say no, anything after January was void.

I'm asking, are you in the position now to do that with anybody that's had a contract? And you've other lawyers here sitting in the benches in the NDP. Can you go to them and say no, even though you had a valid contract, we can bring in retroactive legislation and your nurse's contract can be void on the date you pick, or the contractor's contract can be void on the day you pick, or a union contract, an SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) contract, a telephone contract.

The Speaker: — Would the Leader of the Opposition put his question.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is: what is to prevent you, given this Bill and given the way you've passed it, and this precedent, from applying this retroactivity to every contract in Saskatchewan? And I believe the answer is there's nothing . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Let the minister answer.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it's virtually impossible to know with certainty what the question is. But I will try to discern what I think the questioner was asking. I think the questioner was asking, is whether or not either this Bill or some future Bill or policy of the government is directed toward retroactively breaking all contracts in all cases. And the answer to that is no, it's not the policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Then, Mr. Premier, it must be selective. If you're not going to do it for everybody, then you are going to pick and choose which contracts that you can break.

You've decided to break the contracts with tens of thousands of farmers. Will you ever consider breaking the contracts with government employees, with teachers, with other farmers, or with anybody else that has contracts?

Because once you have done this and justified it in Saskatchewan's legislature, then you'll obviously have the support of anybody else or any NDPer in here that says it's okay, we've selectively picked this group to discriminate against, to retroactively change their life.

What's to prevent you, Mr. Premier, from selectively using this kind of legislation any place else in society?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this government is guided on this matter . . . I shouldn't say in the same way as the former government was guided in its dealings with public policy, but certainly in some ways similar to the way the former government was guided.

When the former premier gets up and accuses us of being selective and ignores the fact that he brought in land bank legislation which specifically broke contracts retroactively, and selectively forgets to admit that, is an indication of the sheer hypocrisy of their position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier, we, as you know, never denied people and people on land bank, access to the courts. What the difference is with GRIP is and what we're afraid of in your legislation is you have not given the courts a role in this retroactive changing of contracts because the Minister of Agriculture doesn't have to go to court. His officials don't have to go to court. His advisors don't have to go to court. People on Crop Insurance, who were fired, don't have to go to court. That's the reason.

Now we want to know if the court has a role in deciding what selective people you can apply retroactivity to because we always let the courts function in the province of Saskatchewan, where you have denied it in this case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's attack rings hollow. When he argues about denial of rights, I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he violated one of the most fundamental rights of any democracy, when he adjourned and prorogued this legislature about one year ago exactly, denying the democratic rights of democratic members of this Assembly to even pass judgement on your budget.

An Hon. Member: — What hog-wash.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And the Leader of the Opposition says that that is hog-wash. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, your nine years has been marked with a litany of denials of individual rights. Believe me, sir, we don't intend to follow your practice or precedent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Murray: — To introduce some guests, Mr. Speaker. Leave?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a group of Voyageurs — 24 students from the Toronto area.

They are here hosted by Les Benjamin, who's the member for Regina-Lumsden. I believe they've had a tour of the buildings. And I'm looking forward to meeting with them later on this afternoon. I'd ask all members to welcome them to this Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 88 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Power Corporation Act.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of some short remarks I will move a motion along the lines:

That notwithstanding Rule 3, this Assembly shall, following the adoption of the motion, meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. with a recess of two hours at 12 noon and 5 p.m., with orders of the day being called at 9 a.m. and routine proceedings being called at 2 p.m. each day.

Mr. Speaker, the reason the government is moving with this motion, which is similar to motions moved by the members opposite in the role now of official opposition, we are at day 60 of the session. We have many estimates that haven't been started. In fact we've completed only 2 of 32 estimates in this session.

We have not had a budget passed in this province for almost two years because the member from Estevan, while he was Premier, ran from the House about this time last year when he couldn't get his budget passed. And the members of the media and the public will remember that very well. He then went to the public, campaigned for a couple of months, and then the people decided that he should be in opposition.

And what we are saying here is that because of the slowness and the filibustering of the members opposite, the lack of work that they are accomplishing on a day-to-day basis, we believe very clearly that more hours have to be sat here.

And I'm sure the members opposite will agree that in order to bring forward the estimates and in order to have many hours to debate the GRIP Bill — and I've heard them say they want to have long periods of time to debate the GRIP Bill — that this motion will in fact get their support in order to allow them to put forward ideas and

amendments that the public and the members of government will want to look at.

So, Mr. Speaker, I therefore move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon River Heights:

That notwithstanding Rule 3, this Assembly shall, following the adoption of this motion, meet on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m., with a recess of two hours at 12 noon and 5 p.m., with orders of the day being called at 9 a.m. and routine proceedings being called at 2 p.m. each day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 2:45 p.m. until 3:15 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 39

Romanow	Hamilton
Van Mulligen	Johnson
Thompson	Trew
Wiens	Sonntag
Simard	Flavel
Tchorzewski	Roy
Lingenfelter	Cline
Teichrob	Scott
Koskie	McPherson
Solomon	Wormsbecker
Kowalsky	Kujawa
Carson	Crofford
MacKinnon	Knezacek
Penner	Harper
Cunningham	Carlson
Upshall	Renaud
Hagel	Langford
Lautermilch	Jess
Calvert	Haverstock
Murray	

Nays — 8

Devine	Britton
Muirhead	Toth
Swenson	Goohsen
Martens	D'Autremont

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 84 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of this Bill, The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1992, (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, The Urban Municipality Act, 1984, is a major piece of legislation setting out the powers and the duties of urban communities in Saskatchewan. These include cities, towns, villages, and resort villages.

The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, individual municipalities, and other groups have asked for amendments to this Act to update the legislation and to ensure it responds to the needs of those who live in these communities. Most of the amendments being proposed at this time relate to administrative changes and minor policy questions.

Under The Urban Municipality Act, 1984, there are provisions authorizing municipalities to enter into agreements with other municipalities in groups for various purposes including the provision for municipal services. However, there is no reference to agreement with the federal government.

Municipal legislation in a number of other provinces permit municipalities to enter into agreements with the federal government. In a recent SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) resolution, municipalities requested the authority to enter into such agreements.

In particular, municipalities wanted authority for agreements respecting the development of federally owned land near airports. This amendment will thus formally authorize municipal agreements with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, another amendment will allow taxi licences to be issued by public tender rather than by limited to a fee that covers only the cost of administration and regulation. Existing taxi licences have a significant market value when transferred from one owner to another. Issuing new licences at nominal cost undercuts this, creates opposition in the taxi industry, and ignores a potential source of municipal revenue.

This Bill will also permit municipalities, if they so choose, to attach conditions to new taxi licences requiring vehicles to be accessible for the physically disabled. This can provide another means of providing transportation for the disabled. It could complement existing transit-for-the-disabled services. The accessibility requirements would be an option that councils could use when issuing taxi licences, but such requirements would not be applied respecting existing taxi licences.

Mr. Speaker, some urban municipalities perform custom work for the residents on their own land. For example, clearing snow. Currently there is no authority in the legislation for performing such work on private land at the request of the owner. Further, there are not adequate provisions for collecting charges for such services. Custom work may be requested often in smaller communities where no contractor is available, or when it is more convenient or less expensive to have the municipality do the work.

The Rural Municipality Act, 1989, includes similar authority for custom work. At SUMA's 1992 convention, delegates passed a resolution calling for similar legislative authority for cities, towns, villages, and resort villages. This amendment authorizes this practice for urban municipalities and provides for the collecting of charges by adding any unpaid charges to the tax roll.

Another amendment addresses establishment of operating and capital financial reserve funds. Operating reserves are now to be created by resolution, acknowledging the greater flexibility required for the operating side. Capital reserves will still be established by bylaw. Saskatchewan Municipal Board approval for existing funds will apply only to capital reserves and not operating reserves.

At present communities under 1,000 population require approval to expend reserve funds. This is being reduced to a population of 500. This retains a board's supervision of smaller centres but recognizes that places over 500 in population must employ qualified administrators and require less supervision of their financial affairs by the Municipal Board.

Municipalities have requested that the limits on penalties on tax arrears be adjusted. They have requested a sliding scale with penalties on arrears increasing as time passes. By permitting the penalty to increase over the year, the taxpayer is encouraged to pay as soon as possible. This Bill provides authority for the minister to prescribe maximums on penalty rates if required.

Another area where some administrative adjustments are being made is respecting tax exemptions. One amendment will clearly provide that exemptions for independent schools are only to be for non-profit K to 12 schools. In the last couple years, proposals for development of several non-profit private schools have been put forward, and one is now in operation.

The initial intent of the legislation excepting private schools was to have it apply only to non-profit schools. However, Justice has advised that regulations cannot be used to limit the exemption in this way. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we propose to amend the Act to clearly limit this exemption to non-profit schools only.

Another amendment relates to taxation on non-reserve land held by, or in trust for, Indian bands. Indian reserve lands are exempt by virtue of being owned by the federal government and by federal legislation. However, an existing clause of The Urban Municipality Act may be interpreted as expanding the federal exemption to exempt non-reserve holdings of bands and their holding companies. These are often commercial in nature.

Repeal of this exemption will not affect this tax-exempt status of any urban Indian reserve lands. A similar provision was removed from The Rural Municipality Act several years ago.

Another amendment clarifies the existing tax-exempt status of the Saskatchewan Legion, making it clear that the exemption includes their provincial headquarters building.

In response to a SUMA resolution this year, we are proposing to allow the use of the term "councillor" interchangeably with the term "alderman" to refer to members in the urban municipal council. This reflects a current status in a number of cities already. Apart from these legislative amendments, there are also a few minor housekeeping amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this Bill is an appropriate response to requests for legislative changes made by elected municipal councils and various groups. They also reflect our duty as a provincial government to help ensure effective local government. I urge all members to support this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will first of all want to state for the viewing public of this Assembly that urban affairs are not my speciality. I've never had a whole lot to do with urban affairs, but my colleague who is expert in this area has to be away today to open a hospital in his constituency. And now that the Assembly has graciously consented from the government side to allow him to speak at that function, he is going to be there today.

The minister, when she was addressing the Assembly on this Bill, says that she wants the government . . . or the people in our province to have the opportunity to make agreements with the federal government, as is the case in other jurisdictions. And on that point, I'm sure that my colleague would probably say we would agree that the people of Saskatchewan in urban centres should have the same basic fundamental rights as all other jurisdictions in our country. And if in fact what I heard turns out to be a fact, I'm quite sure we would support that part of this Bill.

The development of airport lands around towns and cities being into the jurisdiction of the urban centres involved certainly has merit as well, Mr. Speaker. However I am thinking that there might be some implications here that should be researched. And so again, we're going to want to take a long, hard look at that potential of some things being in there that might effect other people.

For example, I can see where rural municipalities might also want to be involved in the process of determining the land uses around airports. Obviously airports take a considerable amount of space, and I suspect that you would rarely put them into the city limits. Therefore giving urban municipalities control over land around the airports might, in fact, have a conflict with rural municipal needs. In fact it might even have a conflict with the people who own and operate agricultural operations in and around certain areas.

I can think of a potential of a disastrous situation such as . . . I recall hearing about in Ontario where an individual had built a silo at the end of one of the runways of a major airport. Both sides naturally thought they were right. The people who built the airport thought that they had jurisdiction to have this airport where they wanted it, and the food producer also thought that because his land was owned by himself that it gave him the right to build his agricultural buildings on his property wherever he liked.

And there became quite an incident that was recorded through the news media for many, many months in that conflict. And I'm not sure that that situation was ever resolved even to this day, Mr. Speaker. So I see that there is definitely a need to discuss and debate and to study the full impact of the motivations in the Act on who should have authority on properties around an airport.

It sounds on the surface as though it would be good for the urbans to have some control over an airport that naturally would be mostly tied to their city. But with all of these other things that I've mentioned, I think we'd better take a little bit of time to take a look at this whole matter and find out who might be profited in this process and who might be hurt in this process. So I'm going to ask the minister to give us some time to study that.

I also note that in her next amendment in this Act she mentions the taxi licensing and conditions of taxi licensing. Here too I think the on-the-surface implication that we would be trying to help the physically handicapped or the physically disabled to have access to taxis, is an admirable approach. However I can see where if you have to equip every taxi in a city as big as Regina, there's going to be a tremendous amount of cost involved.

And I'm wondering if the taxi industry has had a chance to think about this. I wonder if they've even been consulted. I wonder if they know that this is even going on. And I wonder if they can afford, Mr. Speaker, to redesign or rebuild every one of their cabs in the city of Regina or the city of Saskatoon. There must be hundreds of taxis involved here. And while I support vigorously helping disabled people, I'm wondering if it's proper to do it in such a massive way.

(1530)

I suspect that if a fleet had four or five or six of their cars equipped to be able to handle handicapped situations, and when an individual like that phoned in and simply stated that I am handicapped and required the handicapped car, those cars then could be designated by radio to go to those places.

And an all-encompassing kind of an approach to having every car fitted might be not only impractical but impossible. It might just financially ruin the taxi industry. And you may just simply see them saying we don't want your licences any more, we're shutting her down and leaving the province with everybody else that's taken off out of here.

We also in the next item, Mr. Speaker, talked about collecting monies and the processes that could be used. Certainly there are needs for rural . . . urban municipalities like rural municipalities or any other municipality, there's a need to have to be able to collect money that is owed.

But this can be a really touchy area. And you have to be very careful that you don't discriminate against people when you set up collection formulas. My experience in the rural areas of this particular type of situation would suggest that here again we had better contact some of the people that are going to be involved. I think they ought to have access to this Bill. I would suggest to the minister involved that we ought to make this Bill available to those peoples in those centres that are going to be affected so that they can study the implications that will arise from the Bill.

We talked about another aspect of the Bill here, the

reserve funds, the capital revenue bylaw. As you know, Mr. Speaker, by the way the Bill is worded, reserve funds are not anything new. They're already built into the system. But when you talk about changing the principles of reducing it from 1,000 to 500 people that could spend their money without having to get ministerial consent, I think you're almost sort of slapping the folks in small towns across the head and saying that because you live in a small urban centre, you can't be trusted.

And I'm wondering why we have that kind of a figure at all. If you can trust people in a town between 500 and 1,000 people, how come you can't trust the people in a town of less than 500 people to know what they're doing with their own money?

After all, these capital trust funds, these reserve funds, these are not monies that the federal or provincial government put into a fund; this is money that the local people have paid in their taxes on their properties. And when there are excessive dollars around, they are put into that special fund and they're used for such things as buying equipment. For example, I suppose you might have a reserve fund for a water plant or for a well, and in a smaller centre it might be for a grader to grade your streets if you don't happen to have pavement.

So I'm suggesting to the minister that maybe she ought to reconsider this aspect of her amendment and take out the number altogether. If you're going to treat people equally in the province, let's treat them all equally in this respect as well as others.

We talked about . . . Then the next segment of this Bill, it goes into the tax arrears penalties on a sliding basis. Now on the surface again this seems like a good idea. If you are going to have people who don't pay their taxes and after a certain length of time you increase the penalty, immediately on the surface you would say, yes, that's going to be a great incentive for them to pay.

But I would argue very strenuously against using that philosophy because what happens is that in reality the people that can least afford to pay their taxes are the ones that are in arrears. If they can't afford to pay their taxes, how are they going to be able to pay bigger penalties?

And they're not only then going to say after a while, I'm not going to bother paying my taxes or my penalties; I can't afford to pay them any more, because I couldn't afford to pay them to start with . . . So now the penalty itself becomes a deterrent from encouraging people to actually pay. So I'm totally and absolutely opposed to that sliding mechanism being used because it will backfire.

I don't think this is anything new. I think this has been tried in history before, and I think if the minister takes some time to study a little bit, she'll find out that this is a process that has been tried and tested and has failed to produce the kind of results that she was hoping to get.

And I think that it's got to be noted that very likely this will backfire and you will even cause yourself more problems at collecting. In fact I think you might even consider sliding it the other way, that . . . not in all cases, but you have to open the door so that you can relieve some of the

penalties on some people if in fact they offer to pay after a certain period of time.

Municipalities have to have that ability to deal with cases on a piece-by-piece basis, I believe. And if an individual comes in and says, I'm flat broke; I'm going to go out of business; I'm either going to have to have some relief on my taxes or I'm going to give you the land, but I could pay you three-quarters of it; if I could get a break on this thing, I might be able to survive; in some jurisdictions, it might make sense to say, okay, we'll take three-quarters rather than all and keep you in business rather than confiscate your property.

Now that probably wouldn't hold true in Moose Jaw, but it likely would in a small town like, say, Carmichael or a village or something like that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister ought to take a real hard look at her accomplishing what she wants to accomplish with this aspect of her Bill. Because I think it'll backfire. I think she has to rethink it and look at the possibility of giving individual jurisdictions the right to sort of treat each case on its merit.

We also talked in this Bill about the amendments going on to the exemptions no longer being allowed on certain school types of property. Here again, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the people that are involved and are going to be affected by this change, may not know about this Bill. If they did, I'm surprised that they would accept this without some kind of protest. Obviously what you're saying is that some people should in fact pay more. And I guess my colleague wants your attention, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Martens: — I'd like to have leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in the east gallery is a gentleman from Balcarres who is a farmer in the province of Saskatchewan, and has called me and wants to come see me about the impact of GRIP '92. His name is Wes Pinay.

And he has some other significance I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is of merit to this Assembly. He was a page in this Assembly in the early '60s. And I would like to have the members of this Assembly welcome him back to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 84 (continued)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the guest that was just introduced — kind of ironic that the next item on this particular amendment deals with the taxation on native lands.

And I wonder if the minister has notified those people with native lands that might be affected by this Bill. I wonder if she has passed this Bill and the information thereto on to those folks for their consideration. It would seem to me that those people that are going to have to pay more taxes as a result of changes certainly might want to have something to say about it.

I was about to make that point a minute back. And it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if you're going to be asked to pay more taxes, likely that's a motivation to set up some kind of an argument or some kind of a discussion with the people that are going to cause you to pay those extra monies.

I've rarely in my life seen people willing to pay more in taxes without saying something against it. And I'm surprised that nobody is saying something about this Bill, because it increases taxes for an awful lot of people. And I suspect that the only way that we could see this happening, is the fact that they don't know it's going to happen to them yet.

And so I'm saying that we have to get this information out to people. We've got to give them a chance to respond to the legislation, and to consider the impact on themselves and their personal lives.

Mr. Speaker, it's ultimately impossible to have peace and harmony in a province if you have legislation sneaked in on them that's going to affect them in a very serious way. It seems also that if money's involved, it even becomes more critical.

We also noticed in this legislation that there are certain tax exemptions for people involved with the legion that, if I heard right, it sounds to me, will be gone. And if the legionnaires are going to have to pay more taxes in some areas, then they certainly would want to know about that. Now if in fact I misunderstood it, and they are going to get some exemptions that they now don't have, I'm supposing they're going to be pretty happy.

So here again, Mr. Speaker, because I didn't really get a good listen to that last part and haven't had a chance to read it all, and because my colleague, who is the critic for this area, can't be here, I'm going to suggest that we lay this over for a little time, allow people the opportunity to get a hold of the Act and to be able to read it and study it.

And after that process has gone by and we can present the arguments on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan for and against the different segments of the Bill and handle it in a responsible manner in that way, then I think after that period of time it would be proper to deal with the Bill.

And so I'm going to move that we adjourn debate on this Bill at the present time.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 85 — An Act respecting Fire Prevention and Certain Consequential Amendments resulting from the enactment of this Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of this Bill, The Fire Prevention Act, 1992. Mr. Speaker, this Bill provides a comprehensive update of The Fire Prevention Act, 1980. A new approach of fire prevention in this province is required at this time. Key elements of this approach include enhanced authority for municipalities to deal with fire prevention matters at the local level and provisions allowing for provincial adoption of the National Fire Code to ensure consistent and effective fire prevention standards.

Fire chiefs, fire investigators, and others concerned with fire safety, have been lobbying for reforms in the fire prevention legislation. With the Grand Coulee fire and the report commissioned by the government on that fire, the need for action has become more apparent. More uniform standards and effective action are needed throughout this province.

Mr. Speaker, in 1990 there were 2,660 fires in Saskatchewan that resulted in 22 deaths, 100 injuries, and \$43.6 million in property losses. These figures have not changed significantly over a number of years. We are committed to working with our communities to take any necessary action to improve fire prevention and fire fighting capabilities. The amendments contained in this Bill support a local approach to addressing these matters.

This Bill will provide for education and training for the fire-fighters that meets provincial standards and certification procedures. It will provide more flexibility in the appointment of local assistants that investigate fires. It will provide more authority to conduct investigations, including authority for local assistants to temporarily close buildings and to take evidence. It will provide more assurance of independent hearings of fire inspection orders by using the Saskatchewan Municipal Board for appeals.

Mr. Speaker, a fire advisory committee was set up last year to assist the Fire Commissioner's office in developing these initiatives. This committee, which includes representatives of the fire chiefs and fire-fighters association, as well as SUMA and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), has been consulted and provided input into the development of these proposals.

The report on the Grand Coulee fire included as one of its recommendations that the province adopt the National Fire Code. This Bill includes a provision for its adoption on a province-wide basis. The National Fire Code is a set of minimum standards respecting fire safety in buildings and the community at large. Its primary purpose is the promotion of life safety through the application of uniform fire safety standards. Property protection is also an important objective of the code as large fires can have a serious social and economic impact on the community as a whole.

(1545)

The fire code is not rigid in its requirements. It is recognized that total application of property protection requirements to existing buildings may not be economically feasible in that the degree of application

must be based on experience and judgement. The fire code will complement the National Building Code that is already in effect in this province. The two codes work together and this Bill will make the administrative procedures for enforcing both codes more uniform. Fire chiefs have requested greater consistency in the enforcement provisions.

Mr. Speaker, SUMA passed a resolution at its 1992 convention asking for a program to provide training for local fire departments. We are pleased that the new fire-fighters' training and support program, as provided for in this budget, will respond to the need for increased training. In particular this training can address special needs such as dealing with hazardous substances. This Bill will allow for establishment of training and certification standards for fire-fighters. This can facilitate more consistent training levels throughout this province.

Mr. Speaker, this Act will now more clearly outline the responsibilities of the Fire Commissioner. In addition it allows for the delegation of the Fire Commissioner's duties to fire chiefs and local assistants. This will ensure that in communities where there is a considerable fire safety capability, activities can usually be handled without the on-site presence of the Fire Commissioner, and in the past I understand this has proved costly and time-consuming to have the Fire Commissioner involved in these matters that could have been handled locally.

Mr. Speaker, this Act strengthens the enforcement provisions by updating the fines level. In addition, the Bill provides that if building owners do not comply with the fire inspector's order, the fire chief can carry out the work or have it carried out by someone else.

Finally, another reform will be the provision for appeals to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. This will allow matters to be cleared up more quickly by avoiding the use of courts. Further, it ensures that orders that are initially issued by the staff or the Fire Commissioner's office can be heard on appeals by an independent tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that this new Fire Prevention Act will provide a stronger foundation for our work with communities to improve their fire services. Fire chiefs have indicated that new legislation provisions such as this would add significantly to the effectiveness and the efficiency of life safety and fire prevention in this province.

This Act will provide communities with streamlined procedures and increased powers to deal with fire prevention matters. In addition, this Bill contains a number of minor administrative amendments. This legislation responds to needs identified by the Saskatchewan fire chiefs association, the volunteer fire fighters association, fire investigators, and the municipal organizations, for new legislation on fire prevention.

By sharing resources and working together with various involved organizations, we can meet the challenges through the 1990s of protecting our communities from the dangers of fire. By continuing to work together, we can accomplish the mutual goals of life safety and protection of property. Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to

support this Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, everyone in this province is aware of the hazards and the cost both to human life and to property caused by fire. And in that sense, everyone wishes to participate in the elimination of fire as a hazard in our society.

But when we look at the Bill, everybody around the province realizes that the Fire Commissioner plays a very important role in our communities and that he exercises considerable power within our society, within those communities, when it comes to construction of buildings, when it comes to maintenance of those same buildings.

And what we need to know, Madam Minister, and what the society, the people at large need to know, is whether you have consulted with all of those groups that will be affected by this Bill as to just what powers, what new powers the Fire Commissioner will be given, and how the powers that he had before will continue to affect them.

I think of situations such as public buildings. But it deals also with not only public but with private buildings. In Oxbow they were looking at the hospital there. They needed some renovations because of the Fire Commissioner's ruling that the hallways were too narrow. Well the building itself was in not that bad a shape, but to meet the Fire Commissioner's rulings they had to expand the hallways, and that meant a total restructuring of the inside of the hospital at a very prohibitive cost. So the decision was made to build a new hospital.

But if there could be some latitudes and leeways given . . . and I notice in the Bill that there is some exemptions to be granted. But we need the opportunity, the public needs the opportunity, to present their ideas, their concerns about this Bill to the House, to the minister, and to the opposition, as to what kind of exemptions might happen to be available.

This Bill also talks about taxes on premiums for insurance, and has the insurance companies been consulted? Have the people who are paying those taxes on their fire insurance premiums been consulted about this? They may have some ideas that will be relevant to this Bill as to what should actually take place and how it should affect them.

The Bill also deals with the installation and the type of equipment that can be used in buildings. A few years ago, Halon was an acceptable fire prevention or fire-retardant material to be used in buildings, in construction, in automobiles, etc. But today Halon is no longer acceptable except in very special circumstances.

Well the people who manufacture, who supply, who install, who use the fire prevention equipment, have you discussed this Bill with them? Have they had any input? Have they had time for any input? So they need to have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to have some discussion on this Bill, to look over this Bill and to see what it means.

The Bill was presented on July 30 to this House. That's,

what? — six days ago, seven days ago. So the public needs a better opportunity, I believe, Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, to have a look at your Bill.

The Bill also deals with The Municipal Board Act and its powers to review an order made by the Fire Commissioner. So we need the opportunity to have a look at what changes may have been made in that area.

The types of equipment that are dealt with under this Bill, Mr. Speaker, deal with anything that is a potential fire hazard. It deals with people's furnaces, with the chimneys that they may have in their houses. Indeed it even deals with their fireplaces and what kind of material that will be constructed of, in what manner.

It deals with the training of the installers and the people inspecting it, so we need to have a look at . . . a chance to consult with these people to find out what are their concerns. What changes did they foresee that were needed in the 1980 Act that should be incorporated into this Act today?

One of the things that comes to mind when you talk about emergency fire prevention or fire-fighting units occurred down in my constituency at Carnduff. Across the border, there was a major fire in which a number of fire-fighters were killed and severely maimed. The town of Carnduff, Mr. Speaker, volunteered their fire department to go across the international border and provide fire protection for that community of Sherwood, but they ran into a number of snags because the Act and their insurances did not cover themselves for crossing the U.S. (United States) border.

And I wonder if the Madam Minister would consider in this Bill something along the line to allow Saskatchewan licensed and insured fire equipment — in cases of emergency, as it was in the case that happened with Carnduff and Sherwood — to take their equipment across the border and still be covered with the insurances and under the legislation from Saskatchewan.

It was an act of charity on the part of the town of Carnduff's fire department and their volunteer employees. They knew that they were not going to be covered once they crossed that border, but they were willing to make that sacrifice and provide that kind of protection for their neighbouring community. And I believe that is something that we need to take a look at, Mr. Speaker. We need to talk to the other communities around the province and find out just what kind of changes they would like to have in a fire prevention Act that impacts on their communities.

Because of this, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that there needs to be some more time given to all those that will be affected by this Act, I believe at this time we should adjourn this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 87 — An Act respecting amendments to Certain Farm Income Insurance Legislation

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of Bill No. 87, The Farm Income Insurance Legislation Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize the importance of agriculture to the people of Saskatchewan. The agriculture industry provides our province with an economic base and with a valuable way of life that could only be appreciated if you've lived in Saskatchewan.

We have come to know the ups and downs of an industry which competes and competes effectively in an international market-place.

We have learned that every period of difficulty we experience is not the end of our industry. In short, we have learned optimism and faith in the future. Because in spite of periodic crisis, we know from experience that persistence will lead to opportunities and a stronger agriculture and a better way of life in Saskatchewan.

We have also learned that there are ways to ease these periodic crises in agriculture. Farmers know measures to take on their own farms. We also know the value of safety net programs.

Adequate safety nets to stabilize farm income are critically important to a healthy farm sector. Safety nets do not just give money to farmers. Safety nets are really about providing a reasonable level of stability in recognition of the extreme production and market circumstances faced by farmers.

Safety nets provide a level of certainty so that farmers can have the confidence to invest. Safety nets are about lessening the harshest impacts of production hazards and the market-place on the livelihood of farmers and their families and their communities. Finally, safety nets stabilize agriculture so that all those who depend upon agriculture benefit as well.

Safety nets need to be designed to assist the agricultural sector to make decisions that are consistent with a profitable and growing agricultural industry. We need to ensure that an effective program is in place to provide the foundation of stability.

Mr. Speaker, the government and this Legislative Assembly recognize that farm income insurance programs should encourage good farming practices, provide reasonable protection to farmers, and be efficiently administered in the interests of the Saskatchewan taxpayers. The gross revenue insurance program needed to be changed for 1992 in order to achieve these objectives.

The gross revenue insurance program, called GRIP, was introduced in January 1991. This was well before the provincial legislation passed in June 1991, well before a formal federal-provincial agreement was signed in September 1991.

GRIP was created by a combination of revenue insurance provided under The Agricultural Safety Net Act and crop insurance provided under The Crop Insurance Act.

The 1991 program was hastily put into place and contained some very major design flaws. Even the former administration recognized these problems and created an advisory committee to make recommendations for program changes for 1992. The major design flaws in 1991 GRIP were highlighted by the advisory committee which reviewed GRIP from November 1991 to February 1992. That committee was composed of representatives of farm organizations. This is the same committee appointed by the previous administration with only a few changes.

From the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Barry Senft, chairperson; from the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, Keith Hayward; from the United Grain Growers, Roy Piper; from the University of Saskatchewan, originally named by the members opposite, Jack Stabler, who was replaced by the university by Hartley Furtan.

From the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association, Brett Meinert; from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Sinclair Harrison; from the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association, Brian Perkins; from the Western Canada Wheat Growers, Gordon Cresswell; from the Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association, Leonard Kehrig; from the National Farmers Union, Gil Pedersen; two members at large, Nettie Wiebe and Lloyd Johns; and the deputy minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Stuart Kramer.

(1600)

This committee received written and oral submissions from in excess of 300 people and organizations. That committee said the program could not continue with the three major flaws they identified.

These are the three major design flaws identified by the committee. Firstly, crop selection. The individual commodity guarantee resulted in farmers looking at the guarantee when making seeding decisions rather than examining what they could produce best on their farm or for the market.

The 1991 GRIP design caused major problems in a number of areas, most astoundingly in the lentil markets and had to be changed in Manitoba for 1992. The support level for lentils had to be significantly reduced in Manitoba in late spring at a time well after March 15 in order to prevent excess production from flooding the lentil market.

Mr. Speaker, does this sound like an effective safety net program?

The second problem identified by the committee was inappropriate farming practices. According to the committee, farmers were encouraged by 1991 GRIP to adapt their farming practices to GRIP to maximize their farm returns. They were encouraged to reduce fertilizer use and chemical use because the lost revenue resulting from lower production would be fully paid for by GRIP. Farmer premiums and taxpayers picked up the bill for this lost revenue that could have and should have been taken from the market.

Mr. Speaker, does this sound like a program that will contribute to the development of Saskatchewan agriculture? Farmers know that a program that gives the same total revenue, whether they produce 5 bushels or 40 bushels, is wrong.

The third problem identified by the committee was the problems of administration. The 1991 GRIP required bin police and the measurement of production. Farmers know it is difficult to accurately measure production by measuring bins. When every dollar of production offsets a dollar of GRIP payments, the impact of measurement errors for both the farmer and the program is extremely significant.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government was well aware of these problems. The GRIP advisory committee ultimately made recommendations leading to the 1992 program, which has the following features. The advisory committee recommended that:

(a) GRIP should be provided as separate crop insurance and revenue insurance programs;

(b) (that) the crop insurance program should operate as it was prior to 1991, and that the crop insurance price be set at the same level as the market price used in the revenue insurance program;

Crop insurance under the new program is being offered at 80 per cent of the farmer's long-term individual yield.

(c) the revenue insurance program should operate more as a deficiency type program;

Under the new program revenue insurance is a regionally based acreage payment, indexed for a farmer's individual yields. It provides the benefits of individual responses while removing the temptation to look at a particular crop for maximizing farm revenue. The revenue insurance plan will offer producers protection based on their seeded acreage of eligible crops, a per-seeded acre payment for each crop insurance risk area, individualized by an adjustment index based on each farmer's long-term individual yield on crops compared to the long-term area yield. Recommendation:

(d) that no offsets between price and yield should be included in the revenue insurance program;

In other words, farmers should be able to retain all market revenues. Recommendation:

(e) that both crop insurance and revenue insurance should reflect the management ability of individual farmers in determining coverage and payments; and

(f) that only the revised program be offered to farmers in 1992 (i.e. current GRIP should not be continued as an option to farmers).

Those were the recommendations of the committee.

I want to emphasize that these are not just the

observations of the GRIP advisory committee. The report on the future program designed by the national GRIP committee, July 7, 1992 states, and I quote:

... "the goal of providing a highly individualized program which is fully predictable for producers, (and which) is crop specific and maintains full price-yield offsets at the individual level, is in direct conflict with the objective of maximizing the level of market responsiveness and minimizing the potential for moral hazard and program abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to some of the concerns we have heard about the new 1992 GRIP program. The revised GRIP program has been designed in a way that provides income support within the confines of the agreement with the federal government when the new GRIP program was constructed. Farmers continue to suffer from income shortfall in Saskatchewan. That was known when the original agreement was signed with the federal government.

In fact the provinces did not sign into their cost sharing of second line programs like GRIP and NISA (net income stabilization account) until the federal government, through their Agriculture minister, Mazankowski, committed to paying for a third line programming, paying for the disaster relief that needs, from time to time, to be addressed in our province. The risk of these events is far too great for producers of the province to bear through GRIP premiums.

And it is absolutely appropriate that in a country like Canada, different regions of the country support regions that are in distress when distress occurs. These events have traditionally been dealt with by the federal government, and it must stay that way.

I also want to be very clear as to why GRIP premiums increased in 1992 from 1991, another major concern for producers and farmers in Saskatchewan. The federal government has been anxious for several years to push more of the cost of providing safety net programs for farmers onto the provincial governments and the farmers themselves.

One of the measures taken by the federal government in 1991 was to pay 25 per cent of the producers premium as a one-time carrot to get the producer and the province into GRIP. It made good sense for the federal government to do this for one year to get producers in the province on the hook for years to come to pay almost 60 per cent of the cost of GRIP.

Keep in mind that prior to GRIP, the federal government picked up the vast majority of the cost of income support programs for farmers. It made good sense for the federal government to invest in some 1991 carrots in order to reduce their long-term obligation. What astounds me is why we, as a province, would have taken on that share of responsibility, except for the election pressures that faced the previous government at the time.

The effect of what the federal government did was to make 1991 GRIP look like a much less expensive

program than it really was for farmers. When 1992 came, reality set in. Producer premiums sky-rocketed because the federal government withdrew the 25 per cent premium reduction. Reality also set in for the provincial government as Saskatchewan taxpayers were now faced with a massive burden as a result of the shifting of costs for the federal government to the Government of Saskatchewan.

The former administration not only allowed this to happen, but participated fully in making it happen. That for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan means that between 1988 and 1992, the province of Saskatchewan — or 1991 — the province of Saskatchewan taxpayers increased their contribution to these types of programs from virtually zero to \$260 million — \$260 for every man, woman, and child in this province in a period of four years. And our previous administration encouraged that kind of off-loading.

Producer premiums also increased in some areas because crop insurance premium rates increased to reflect yield loss experience in each risk area, and because of increased crop prices. We need to be clear that these increases would have happened whether or not we had changed GRIP for 1992.

I want also to respond, Mr. Speaker, to what some people would lead us to believe is a real issue — the question of whether producers were adequately notified of the revisions to GRIP.

Saskatchewan was prepared to announce revised 1992 GRIP before the end of February 1992. The federal government stonewalled the process to implement revised 1992 GRIP. The federal government had allowed virtually every other province to customize GRIP to meet their own provincial needs in 1991. Yet the federal government hesitated to allow Saskatchewan the same privilege in 1992.

Saskatchewan made every effort to inform producers about how GRIP would operate in 1992-93. A press conference was held on March 13, 1992, to announce how the new GRIP would operate. A brochure was prepared and sent to all rural post office boxes in the first week of April 1992. Extension staff and crop insurance agents met with producers individually through April and in groups. The deadline for producers to make decisions on GRIP was extended from March 31 to April 30 and then to May 15.

And because of the delays in implementing the amendments to The Agricultural Safety Net Act, 1992, the deadline for opting out of GRIP was set at July 20, 1992. The extension of decision deadlines gave farmers ample opportunity to review 1992 GRIP, meet with their crop insurance agents, and make a decision to opt out or stay in GRIP.

These rigid deadlines that were originally in the slapped-together program that was put together last year were unworkable and inconsistent with the provisions of the federal-provincial agreement, as evidenced by the fact that the previous government repeatedly ignored the deadline in their own crop insurance programs and in the

first year of implementing the GRIP program.

We have replaced this provision with a more practical provision, ensuring farmers have adequate time to consider program changes; a provision that is consistent with the federal-provincial agreement.

In addition, we implemented an enhanced opting-out provision; a provision more favourable with the farmers than that called for in the federal-provincial agreement. Producers who did not want to participate in the 1992 GRIP were able to opt out by repaying any payments in excess of the premiums paid by themselves and the federal and provincial governments on their behalf.

In recognition of the change in program design, we wanted to allow producers who wanted out of GRIP or wanted to participate only in crop insurance to withdraw with as little penalty as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the real issue that this House should be debating is whether 1992 GRIP is better than 1991 GRIP. Producers have told us that 1992 GRIP is a better and more responsible program.

Mr. Speaker, while 1992 GRIP is a drastically improved program, I want everyone to be aware that a severe income problem remains. Saskatchewan farmers are facing an income shortfall for the last two years as a direct result of the inadequate federal payments to farmers in Saskatchewan approaching \$1 billion. How can we expect farmers to feel good about any program when they are strung out on a debt load from the federal government not meeting their responsibility over the last two years?

These are problems that programs like revenue insurance and crop insurance cannot address and were not designed to address. These are issues that are the responsibility of the federal government. These are the third line of assistance problems that are, for example, evidenced by drought or frost or prolonged international trade war subsidies.

While we continue in Saskatchewan to suffer from trade problems, we are encouraged that this year the area of serious crop concerns are small, that we presently have less plough-down than we had in last year's bumper crop conditions, and that present indications are for a slightly better than average crop.

Farmers are more optimistic this year. They have increased their input use by 22 per cent, hopefully a reflection of the new program, because in the neighbouring provinces, in both Alberta and Manitoba, there is virtually no increase in input use. Saskatchewan farmers have seen the opportunity to farm the way they always did farm before last year's flawed program was put in, and they responded. And we need to be thankful for the energy and the commitment of Saskatchewan farmers and for the conditions that make it look like we're going to have an average crop this year.

We still need to address those third line of defence problems and we are still going to continue to negotiate with the federal government for appropriate support for Saskatchewan farmers. And we hope that once this Bill is

passed, members opposite will join us in that struggle.

(1615)

I want to say that the legislative amendments contained in Bill No. 87 do provide for a farm support review committee. The existing farm programs continue to be inadequate even after the improvements that have been made, and Saskatchewan farmers want an opportunity to contribute to the design of a program that is much better than anything that has come forward to date, and we will give them that opportunity and will be announcing the structure for that committee within the next couple of weeks.

This committee will receive and prepare reports making recommendations on the need for improvements to farm support programs and recommendations for future safety net program design. The 1992 GRIP does not meet all of the farmers' needs for safety net protection. There is still much to be done. And these issues will be reviewed with farmers.

The committee will also look carefully at how we can encourage the federal government to meet its obligation for safety net programs so that our farmers can be poised for the kind of contribution that they can make to the Saskatchewan, the Canadian, and the international economy when conditions return and they are able to again function independently of government support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of this Assembly to support these amendments. And I move second reading of Bill No. 87, The Farm Income Insurance Legislation Amendment Act, 1992.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be dealing with this motion and this Bill in a number of areas. And I want to deal with it in a preamble today because, at the conclusion of my remarks, I'm going to adjourn the debate.

However I'm want to point out to the people of this Assembly that the process that we had become involved in, in relating to the GRIP Bill, have a number of areas that I think need to be addressed. We have, Mr. Speaker, the legal implications. We have the history involved in the discussion and the agreements reached with the provincial government, the former government, and this government. We have how they impact on the farmer and the farmer's relationship to the process, also the farmer's relationship to the end product and the variables

We have the program differences. We have the government's role in obstructing justice. And we have what I believe to be a significant affront to the justice system.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that when matters of this nature were brought to our attention in times past — and I will point out two of them, Mr. Speaker, that we dealt with — when issues of a controversial nature which dealt with an infringement on the rights of individuals, these matters were referred to the Supreme Court for an opinion, a

constitutional reference.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to the members of this Assembly that the people of the province of Saskatchewan have been asked through this Legislative Assembly committee to deal with the constitutional matters. And, Mr. Speaker, the committee is going to be asking this Assembly for almost \$200,000 to provide them access to go around and ask questions about the constitution. On one hand we have people talking about the constitution, and on the other hand they have them breaking the constitutional rights of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no other way that you can read sections of this Bill. Mr. Speaker, people have taken this government to court. It has been ruled, Mr. Speaker, that there is a prima facie case against the government. And, Mr. Speaker, the ruling that was given would have provided an opportunity for the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan to have their constitutional rights validated by giving them an equal opportunity in a court of law.

And what has happened here, Mr. Speaker, is that this government under deliberate actions are going to void all of the things that happened. They're going to take them away.

And I think, Mr. Speaker . . . We had, for example, a reference to the appeal court when the discussion on abortion took place in the early . . . or the mid-'80s. We had an appeal to the appeal court to have a decision made on whether it had constitutional validity. And, Mr. Speaker, that was done at the decision of the government.

Mr. Speaker, the second time that there was a constitutional reference was a little over a year ago when the people of the province of Saskatchewan made representation in a serious way, through the courts, to say that the division of the province in an electoral basis was not correct.

Mr. Speaker, the constitutional right of individuals was accepted by the government of the day. And I was a part of that administration that said we will make an observation and a reference to the Supreme Court for a decision, a decision, ladies and gentlemen of this Assembly, a decision that would have allowed for a reference and said, is this constitutionally correct?

And, Mr. Speaker, the decision of the government was put at the hands of the justices, the supreme justices of the country of Canada.

And what was the response, Mr. Speaker? The response was that the individuals and the decision to have the electoral boundaries as presented in a Bill in this Assembly were constitutionally within the framework of individual rights. It was a decision based on reference to the constitution, the Supreme Court for a constitutional assessment. And, Mr. Speaker, that came back, and they said yes; you go ahead with the Bill. It is within the constitution and the framework of the human rights of individuals in the province of Saskatchewan.

And what have we got today, Mr. Speaker? We have reference to nothing. These people won't even let the

appeal court deal with reference, let alone the Supreme Court, as it relates to the constitutionality of denying access in a court of law to the kinds of things that they've proposed in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I honestly and firmly believe that the people in executive branch of this government are hiding behind this Legislative Assembly. This Legislative Assembly is going to put the Bill forward, and they are going to force farmers to pay for that constitutional reference.

Mr. Speaker, on the one hand we have a committee that is prepared to spend \$200,000 going around the province and telling people what the province, what the executive branch of government is doing in the constitutional debate — not asking them, Mr. Speaker. The process and the involvement has been outlined by the Minister of Justice that that is what he expects them to do. They've got an advertising budget. They've got a transportation budget. They have all of this set out, and what are they going to do? They're going to put this information out into the hands of the people, of what the Premier and the Minister of Justice have decided.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly the reason why I think, Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of the province of Saskatchewan should have a better deal. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am going to at this point in time ask this Assembly to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — Why is the minister on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — With leave for the introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I want to introduce to you, and through you to other members of the Legislative Assembly, a friend and a former minister in a neighbouring community of Plenty, Jim Osborne is in the gallery here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Education Vote 5

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Education, and this is continuation of review of estimates. I'll ask her to introduce the official or officials who are with her here today.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce on my left, Arlene Hynd, the deputy minister of the Department of Education.

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, it's been a few days since we've had the chance to discuss education in this Assembly. I have a couple of questions, and I'm not sure whether they've been dealt with in depth, regarding the student assistance program for university. And I'm wondering what kind of dollars are included in this year's budget to help with university educations through the student assistance program.

(1630)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I believe the member opposite would be referring to the operations of the student aid, the provincial student aid plan, financial assistance which is available to all — not just university students — but all students entering post-secondary education in the province: SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), the universities, regional colleges, the private vocational schools, and SIAST.

There is an allocation from the consolidated revenue fund for loans. It is approximately \$45 million basically, but then there is recovery from student repayments from loans that are in place right now. So the net amount in the '92-93 year is estimated to be just over \$30 million. So there would be the 45 million and then the repayments.

In addition to that of course there is the federal funding, the Canada student loans program, which in most cases must be accessed first. And then the student aid provincially is a supplement to that.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying, Madam Minister, is that the province does have in place \$45 million. However, a number of students are now repaying some of the original loans so that money is flowing in, which means that the Consolidated Fund this year is actually putting up \$30 million. But with the funds that are being repaid, you're still going to have \$45 million in place. Do I understand you correctly?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, that's right. The level is approximately the same as last year. It hasn't been reduced.

Mr. Toth: — How many students would be, or have applied, or would be accommodated through this funding for this year, Madam Minister, as I'm sure a number of students have already applied with the university and the extra educational school year is just being around the corner. Would you have those numbers available?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — For the upcoming year, although within the private school system and with summer sessions at the university, the academic year isn't quite as clearly defined as it used to be. I wouldn't have accurate figures yet on the numbers of applications because they would be still being processed, and applications really are received throughout the year for various semesters of study.

But certainly the number of people in Saskatchewan

accessing or applying to access post-secondary education is higher as a percentage of our population than in any province in Canada, and increased between 1989 and 1991 by over 40 per cent. So that the demands on the provincial student aid program are certainly very high, and we are at the moment having a review of the policy of the student aid — the provincial student aid program — to determine how we can prioritize the funds that are available to make sure that, although it has always been means tested, to make sure that as many people have access to post-secondary education as possible. And the objective being that no one who has the will and the academic qualifications will be denied the opportunity for post-secondary education because of lack of money.

Mr. Toth: — Madam Minister, of the student loans that are out to date, what percentage of the student loans would be in arrears as far as repayment?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we will look for the actual numbers for the most recent date possible, and we'll undertake to provide those. But it normally runs about 20 per cent of the whole portfolio, which at the moment would be about 18,000 students.

Mr. Toth: — You're saying 18,000 students would have arrears on the loan, or you're saying 20 per cent of the student loans available are normally in arrears? And of that 20 per cent, does the department normally run into a number of those 20 per cent that they have very great difficulty in obtaining repayment of those student loans? What would the percentage be of the number of student loans that just don't get totally paid back?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the 18,000 figure that I referred to would be the entire case load of the provincial student aid program at the moment, in which some of those loans would not yet be in the repayment phase because the loan doesn't become repayable until some months after the student has graduated from the program.

And then there are a number of provisions made for students who, for instance, have difficulty finding employment after they graduate and are not in a position to repay, or whose salary is not what they projected and they have difficulty. So the 20 per cent would be the amount that is actually due, that would be in arrears. And I believe that last year — or I'm not sure now whether this would have taken place in this fiscal year or just prior to the end of the last fiscal year — but approximately \$6 million was written off as being uncollectable.

Mr. Toth: — Madam Minister, that figure of \$6 million disturbs me somewhat. And the reason I say it disturbs me is because I believe the purpose of the student loans was certainly to help students coming from family situations that really didn't have the wherewithal to provide the financial funding for their teenager to attend a further educational program.

And I know over the . . . in the six years since I've been an MLA representing the Moosomin riding, certainly a number of people have raised concerns with regards to the student loan program. I guess one of the major areas

that comes up — and a contentious area — is the fact that there is a means test available or a way that the department is looking at assessing whether a student requires or should have access to a student loan.

And I don't have a great deal of difficulty with the fact that parents, I believe, should have some responsibility. And parents are asked to have some responsibility in the further education of the children, providing for that education, as I believe there are a number of families in this province who do have the ability. And we as parents should accept the responsibility to educate our children as well and to provide for their education.

The problem I do have is with individuals who seem to feel . . . and you've probably heard it and I've heard it. A one-parent family will argue, well my daughter is 18 now and they're on their own. And they should, because they're on their own, generating their own income, they should be able to apply for a student loan and get their student loan without coming to me for assistance.

And I've run into situations where individuals are professionals, and maybe both the husband and wife are working in government-sponsored job occupations where there's substantial dollars coming into the home. I think . . . I'm not sure how the department is trying to assess the program and assess the needs, because I believe we should, or the department should, be doing whatever it can to make sure and give every student the opportunity to gain further education.

So in light of the fact that there's only \$45 million of aid available from the provincial government and I believe somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 50 from the federal government, we realize this doesn't go that far. So therefore it's our responsibility to try and make sure it reaches and is placed in the hands of individuals who need it the most.

And I'm wondering what steps the department is taking right now because there'll be pressure on the department. There's pressure on individuals, on individual MLAs to say, well under these circumstances, even though maybe a household has \$60,000 coming into it, that my son or my daughter is out. And they only were able to get a \$5 or a minimum wage job this summer. They should be able to get some funding. I wonder if the minister could respond to that.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of different ways to respond to. There are a number of facets to the question.

As the member understands, the current program is means tested. And if you do take a look at the application form, it takes into account the parents' income. And if a parental contribution is deemed able to be made, then it's expected.

There's also a provision for a contribution by the student in some cases. And in the cases like you cite, where a student is living in a fairly affluent home and the parents think they should be able to access, a student is not considered independent of the parent's income until they've been living away from home independently of

parental contributions for at least two years.

And it is, always has been, a means-tested program. This is the reason that we have set up, in recognition of problems in this area that we recognize . . . although no applicant who meets the income criteria is ever turned down. So the funds are not limited in that respect.

But there is an attempt, through a very rigorous application form . . . although it was simplified this year quite a bit. We reduced the length of the form from 20 pages to 10, attempted to make it simpler, but arrive at the same result. We didn't change the criteria.

But that is the reason that we have set up a review committee to review how student aid is made available. The other area that we're attempting to improve communications in is to high school students and their parents, through brochures and information, at an earlier age in high school so that students and parents can begin to plan for the post-secondary educational opportunities that the students want to access.

These programs . . . the federal one, the Canada student loan program, has been in place for about 20 years. It has similar criteria, but it's not administered by the federal government. It is administered by banks and credit unions as agents. And the default rate in the federal program is much, much higher than in our provincial plan which we administer in-house.

But we're attempting . . . it seems over those 20 years, although it's always been means tested, even the federal one and the provincial one which came into place in 1986, that the longer it's in place the more there seems to be sort of a feeling growing that, well, I don't have to provide for my education, I can always get a student loan. And we will never be able to afford to operate in that mode, not just this province but any province.

So we're developing information, as I say, that will go out at an earlier age to high school students who are planning to continue their education, to alert their families and the students that we do expect that this is a shared responsibility, that it should be planned for, and that a parental contribution, wherever possible to the maximum extent possible, and indeed a student contribution through working between semesters and contributing and supporting their own ambitions for education, should be a requirement at all times, that it is a shared responsibility.

The Chair: — The Chair has recognized that while the minister was making her remarks one of her officials has entered the Assembly. And I would ask that she would introduce her official before I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I didn't notice him coming up behind me. Seated behind the deputy minister is Robin Johnson from the Department of Education.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Madam Minister, I appreciate that because I believe personally that each one of us, as I indicated earlier, as parents have some responsibility for

the education of our children; and the fact that as a department we are taking the time to inform people and lay out what the guidelines are for the student loan program. And it, even in the earlier years, I think would get the information out there so parents are aware of what the guidelines are, students are aware of the guidelines, and parents will plan ahead, for one simple reason.

I don't think it's any easier for a student. It might look nice to apply for and obtain a student loan and not have to worry about start paying it off till six months after you graduate, but over a period of maybe four or five years, that student loan could accumulate to the neighbourhood of 20, 30, maybe even \$40,000 which that's a substantial debt to all of a sudden have on your back and on your shoulders as you get . . . just nicely get started in the work force and maybe you're looking at starting a job and maybe starting a home and looking for a home.

So I think any efforts that can be taken to help people realize the responsibilities they have, help students recognize the responsibilities that they have, and encouraging them in the fact that the more they can set aside today for tomorrow is going to be to their benefit. Because of the fact that we all know, even in government, it's very difficult to plan for tomorrow when you have long and heavy debt resting on your shoulders.

(1645)

So I would suggest to the . . . And the Minister of Finance said, thank you. I wish he would acknowledge and appreciate the fact if he would've said thank you when we were trying to let the people of Saskatchewan know of the debt load that we were trying to work around as well.

Anyway, getting back to the educational process, as was indicated, the student loan program in this province did make a substantial contribution and did add to that . . . increase their contribution during the '80s. In fact it was in the mid-80s that the student provincial assistance really took a substantial hike, as we saw a greater number of students and even older people going back and furthering their education.

Madam Minister, another thing I would like to bring up regarding student loans, and it came up . . . one question in particular that came across my desk was a family where the husband had passed away very suddenly and the widow had contacted me because she had an older, well-kept car. It didn't cost a lot. She had purchased it . . . and her daughter — it was a lot easier for her — she had transferred ownership of the vehicle to her daughter, and when her daughter applied for a student loan, the value of that vehicle was taken into consideration even though she hadn't paid for it. And it took away from her ability to get a student loan.

And I think, Madam Minister, that that wasn't . . . The fact that the ownership was transferred to the daughter, I personally don't believe that that should have affected the daughter's ability to obtain the student loan, and certainly the widow and the mother realized later that she should have kept ownership and just given it to her daughter to use.

And I'm wondering if the department has set some criteria to address this situation and maybe at least letting people know that . . . I believe the ability of obtaining student loans . . . so even your assets can come into play on your ability and where the department stands on that question.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned, we recognized very early on that there were problems in the area of student aid. And indeed in November, 1991, we engaged a consultant to work together with the administration in the student aid department in an effort to look at the systems and management and attempt to streamline and simplify the process.

We think that was very successful. We did, as I said, shorten the application form, make it much simpler to understand, reducing it from 20 pages to 10. The turnaround time which used to average about 10 weeks before students would have a reply as to whether they were eligible and at what level, has been reduced in most cases, if the application is complete, to a week or as little as a day. So there have been a number of changes.

One of the changes that we made — although the Canada student loan criteria have not changed so we have to make sure to make a distinction because they're not exactly the same — but we did make a change in the exemptions. There's an exemption for a vehicle up to \$4,500 and there's exemption for cash savings of \$1,500 for single students and \$3,000 for married students. So we did change that to alter the value of the . . . the effect that a value of an owned vehicle would have.

I don't know how recent the case is, the specific case that you're referring to, but if it was prior to the rule change, I would welcome you, Mr. Chairman, welcome the member to contact my office with the specifics. And if a review is warranted, then we would be glad to do that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I brought that up as an example because I wasn't sure of the changes, the fact that changes had been made. Because I believe the student in question may have even graduated from university just this past year.

But the other thing I was going to mention is I believe you indicated that changes have been made on the provincial side; however federally changes haven't been made. And if I understand it correctly, a student must apply and obtain a federal loan before they're able to access a provincial loan. Is that correct?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that's correct. The Saskatchewan student aid plan is intended to be a supplement to the Canada student loan plan. And indeed the provincial ministers of Education in every province and territory have been asking for a meeting with the federal Minister of State for over a year now to discuss much needed changes to the Canada student loan plan. Because none of the weekly loan limits, the provisions, the criteria, have been changed in the federal plan since 1984.

So with inflation and changes in the cost of living and the situations of students, certainly we feel that an updating is warranted. And in fact a meeting did take place with the

Secretary of State close to the end of March of this year, 1992, at which time the federal government did table a paper acknowledging the various changes, the various areas where they recognized that the current provisions were likely out of date.

They undertook to make some changes but they did say that they would not be in time for this fiscal year, that they project that no changes will be made in the federal plan until at least the September semester of 1993.

We did prevail upon the federal government, if they weren't willing to make changes in any other areas, to at least eliminate the 3 per cent administration fee on loans which they added last year. They recognize it as a problem but said that because of the large defaults in the federal plan, being at least 30 per cent if I recall, that they felt that until their collections improved, that they didn't want to proceed with the enhancements to the federal plan. But we are encouraging them to bring it up to date.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And you did get into what was going to be another question. That was asking what the provincial department was doing regarding consultation with the federal department on changes so that there was basically the same guidelines right across Canada. And I'm glad to hear that it's not just Saskatchewan contacted, but all the other provinces, as I firmly believe that we must work towards more reciprocal agreements right across Canada.

So regardless of where a student goes or people transferring in and out or going to further their education in another province, that we have basically the same guidelines and rules applying, because I'm sure that would simplify the process as men and women and teenagers look at furthering their education.

In view of that, Madam Minister, I'd like to change my questioning a bit. I have a request that has come in — and I'm not sure where it has gone — but I would like to ask the minister whether any action has been taken or anything has been received or agreed to or have we've come to some kind of an agreement down in the area in the Maryfield and Moosomin, Rocanville area, right along the border. And I'm sure I believe the Alberta border would face the same situation.

There are areas where Saskatchewan communities happen to be a lot closer and more easily accessible for say Manitoba students and vice versa. So there are some situations where Saskatchewan students would be a lot closer to a Manitoba school. And I have a letter that indicates in the Maryfield area, an article in the *World Spectator*, February 25, '92, informed us that Manitoba children will not be allowed to attend schools in this unit without paying a tuition fee of upwards towards \$4,000.

And they also indicate that there are several students from Manitoba attending the Maryfield School, with the potential for more . . . with a number of these are older students and a number of the families still have younger students that would be coming in.

And they're afraid that, with the fact that the parents are going to be asked to pay this tuition fee now, that they will

have to look at sending their students to a Manitoba school, which is a longer bus ride, which means it takes away from their unit, and certainly some of the Manitoba schools along the border are facing the same scenario.

And I'm wondering what the department has done, whether or not agreements have been reached or where things are sitting as we draw closer to the school year, as many parents would like to know where we stand on that.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it is the responsibility, as the member opposite knows, of the school divisions to negotiate these arrangements. And as he rightfully points out, there are obviously a fairly large number of school divisions where these situations arise, both upon our Manitoba and Alberta borders.

In the past — and it's not unique to Saskatchewan; all the provinces of course are feeling some fiscal pinch if you like — there was sometimes an overlooking of the school division if there was some cross-over between provincial boundaries in school divisions. But I think the situation is that we're now asking that out-of-province students pay tuition to the school division in which they are attending, and likewise that Saskatchewan students who would be attending in Manitoba or Alberta would pay tuition to those school divisions.

And that is a cost that in the foundation formula, the funding that the provincial government provides to school divisions, that we do recognize. Because we realize how important it is for the configuration of education in an area for families to be able to stay together and for the bus rides that students are exposed to be minimized.

So we rely on, you know, the common sense of the elected officials at the local level to sort out what is the best situation. But what we're saying now is that once that's determined, that the students on either side of the border should pay tuition to the board that is providing their education. And as I say, when a Saskatchewan student pays that to another province, we recognize it as a cost, the department does. And we reimburse it.

In the specific instance that you mentioned, I'm not sure whether there's been a resolution there, but the department has been having meetings with some school divisions that are affected and certainly stands ready to assist in any local negotiations where there are those difficulties.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying then, Madam Minister, is this process of negotiation is basically taking place between school units along the borders. A unit in Manitoba will negotiate. And if there are 20 students coming from that unit into a unit in Saskatchewan, if there are 20 students going back and forth there was . . . would that mean there wouldn't be a tuition fee charged at all if it happened to work out that there was roughly an equal distribution of students?

And are you also saying, Madam Minister, that the department is not involved at all in trying to reach some kind of reciprocal provincial agreement that would alleviate the need for unit boards to derive and come to

agreements between boards?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I may not have made myself quite clear when I talked about some ongoing negotiations that the department was involved in, as indeed we are attempting to arrive at an arrangement, an umbrella arrangement or a blanket arrangement interprovincially between the respective provinces so that school . . . so that the situation is well understood and so that school divisions don't have to, on a one-to-one basis, make those arrangements themselves.

Mr. Toth: — Madam Minister, when you're talking of students paying tuition fees and the sum of \$4,000 was brought up, you also indicated that and, if I understand you correctly, if a Saskatchewan student ends up going to school in Manitoba and is paying, and if it's — I'm not sure but I'll throw out the sum of \$4,000 as the letter indicates here that Manitoba residents would be paying — if a Saskatchewan student was paying that amount and I'm not . . . it would . . . I'm not sure what the funding per student is that is sent to each division. Are you telling me that . . . telling the Assembly that the Saskatchewan . . . the parents of that student can apply to the unit board to be reimbursed for that amount?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the recognized costs average over the province . . . and of course it varies, depending on the size of the school and distances travelled and so on, but it's approximately \$4,500 per student. And I'm very familiar with these arrangements, not on an interprovincial basis but because my own children attended . . . we were residents of a rural school division that was close to a major urban centre, and the local school division, the rural school division, made the determination that rather than expending a lot of capital building schools in the urban fringe, that they would make an arrangement and have a number of children, again with the objective of minimizing the length of the bus ride, educated in the adjacent urban municipality. And certainly that was the range in which the tuition fees were. It was established as the recognized cost in the unit that one division would pay to the neighbouring one.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. It being 5 p.m. the Committee of Finance stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.