

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Regarding the Workers' Compensation Board: (1) why in the face of job action is the board allowing out-of-scope employees in the payment section to take holidays if the board's first concern is the fate of our injured workers; (2) after moving from its past location, what was the value of the furnishings disposed of and were those furnishings sold according to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) guidelines; (3) how much money was paid to Brown & Associates in the past year and for what purpose was this payment made; (4) what is the cost of the electronic security system purchased by the Workers' Compensation Board; (5) what was the cost of the contract with Information Systems Management and how many consultants were hired as a result; and (6) were the contracts referred to in questions (3), (4), and (5) awarded after an open tender?

I give notice that on I shall Friday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding Department of Health and the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre: (1) has the Regina Health Board withdrawn its proposal to close the pediatric wing of the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in favour of closing up to 30 rehabilitation beds in the same facility; (2) how many patients might be affected by such a proposal; (3) what is the minister going to do to accommodate longer waiting-lists of patients, including those with neurological disorders, accident victims, injured workers, stroke victims, and others who will be affected if such a proposal is accepted; (4) how many employees might be affected by such a proposal; (5) how much money will be cut as a result of these bed closures; (6) what has the minister done to determine what proposals for bed closures have actually been put forward and discussed with the staff of the rehabilitation centre; and last, how does this approach to rehabilitative medicine fit the NDP government's wellness model.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to introduce to you, and through you to members of the legislature, a group of I believe 22 public servants who are here today on a visit to the legislature. And they will spend the entire day within this building visiting various parts of the building and exploring some of the things that

we do here.

They're in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're the group on your right. And I want them to know that we welcome them here, that I speak on behalf of all members of this legislature in saying how much we value the public service that we have in this province. We think it to be an excellent one — a long-time tradition in this province of excellence in the public service, and we all intend that that tradition should continue in the future.

And I'd like members of the legislature to join me in welcoming these guests here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the opposition, I too would like to join the minister in welcoming our guests from the public service here this afternoon. Certainly people across Saskatchewan are proud of and pleased to have men and women who work with such integrity in our public service, and welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be recognized. And I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislative Assembly two young men who are very active in participating in the political life of this province.

I would like to introduce to you Mikeal Fosty, sitting in the west gallery, and Cory Fletcher. They are strong and dedicated members of the Saskatchewan Young New Democrats. And I welcome them here to this House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to the legislature Donna and Grey Cowie, farmers from the Alida area in my constituency. And Donna was also my campaign manager during the election last . . . in '91.

I'd like to ask the Assembly to welcome them to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the member from Souris-Cannington to welcome the Cowie's. I didn't realize they were here. But they're long-time . . . here somewhere . . . long-time neighbours of ours on the farm back in Carnduff, and great people. So I would just like to join the member in saying, welcome here and all the best to you. Good to see you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding Cuts to Wascana Rehabilitation Centre

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, yesterday we had some people sitting in the Speaker's gallery, parents of children who were very concerned about the situation at Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. Those parents were quite shocked yesterday, Mr. Premier, when during questioning of your government by our Health critic, that those parents saw members of the government laughing about the situation that their children were involved in.

And I would think, Mr. Premier . . . And I'm asking this question today not on behalf of the opposition but on behalf of those parents who requested that we come here today and ask your government, a government that always said we are the champions of medicare and now we're becoming the champions of I don't care. Would you, Mr. Premier, on behalf of your government and your members, who laughed about that situation yesterday, stand and apologize on behalf of your government?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, but I think the hon. member is misdirecting where our laughter was directed. It was directed at the incredibility, the incredulity of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, that the official opposition would, after nine years of desolation and destruction, have the gall to get up in the legislature and pretend that they care about the health care situation. The laughter is directed to you, sir, not in this Chamber but throughout the entire province of Saskatchewan; not to the people that are affected. Everybody is concerned about the people that are affected.

But when you get up after nine years of giving money to the GigaTexts and the Weyerhaeusers and the Cargills and bankrupting the health care system, I say to you, sir, that is laughable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Well I can tell you, Mr. Premier, that the parents of 800 handicapped children in this province don't find what your Minister of Health has been doing as laughable at all.

This is a minister, Mr. Premier, who says that she doesn't know anything about the situation, a minister that has already seen 40 positions removed from Wascana Rehab, \$2 million in funding. And now the entire pediatric ward of that institution is gone and your minister knows nothing about it.

Mr. Premier, will you commit today — because obviously this minister is so callous that she will not — will you commit today that before the budget, you personally will meet with the parents' association of those 800 handicapped children who your Minister of Health, through her callous nature, is putting at risk? Would you do that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health in the province of Saskatchewan, of the current administration, is doing, in my judgement, a marvellous job in meeting with individuals and parents and the

providers of health care as we try to restructure the health care system in the province of Saskatchewan, to fashion it to the next generation where we can lead once again in the province of Saskatchewan, and also to fashion it in consequence of the destruction that you, sir, wreaked on the people of handicapped children and others in the province of Saskatchewan.

She has offered, as she did yesterday in question period, to meet with this group. I take her at that word, that she will meet with the group. I have confidence in the Minister of Health. And I'm sure that the concerns of that group or any other group will be met as the result of any such future meeting.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the Premier. Well, Mr. Premier, unfortunately the actions of that minister make your words ring hollow. This minister has been receiving letter after letter after letter from parents concerned. She has had invitations ignored.

Mr. Premier, when I said this is the party of I don't care, that is what hundreds of people around this province are saying to the official opposition, to third parties, because it is obvious that this minister is afraid to face the very people who she takes services away from — the same minister who stood here in opposition and demanded more of the government in health care.

Sir, because those words ring hollow, will you give the commitment today that you will meet with the parents of those 800 handicapped children in this province? Will you do that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for the members opposite to understand that in the health reform, what we are attempting to accomplish is to set up district boards with local control and local decision making. The Regina Health Board is in the process of looking at the facilities in Regina and trying to rationalize them and determine how best to provide quality health care services.

Now what has happened as a result of the events over the last day or two and what was taking place at Wascana Rehab — and the members opposite should know this — was a consultation process by the Regina Health Board. There had been no decision made, unlike what they tried to portray — no decision made. All options were being reviewed. And there'd been a document put out. The Regina Health Board offered to meet with those people and discuss their concerns because no decision had been made. They were going through a consultation process.

Now I was in Saskatoon this morning at SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities). However, when I came back I noticed that a press release had been put out by the Regina Health Board today which indicates that following the consultation, which took place earlier this week, the decision has been made that at this time the best interests of the patients will be met by maintaining the five pediatric beds at the Wascana Rehab Centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, the only option that has been explored in the last 24 hours was how to save your skin. You know darn well, Madam Minister, that there had been decisions made about moving those children to hospitals, other hospitals in the city. And you also know, Madam Minister, that that was one reason that the parents were here yesterday, is because the care that was potentially there for their children wasn't the same as what they would get at Wascana Rehab.

Now, Madam Minister, I want you to commit today that not only will the five beds be there, that before any major decisions are made, that you will meet with the parents' association and that that entire wing — that entire wing, Madam Minister — will be available to handicapped children in this province, as it should be. Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, the fact is, is the Regina Health Board is exploring all options and they'll continue to explore options. And I am always prepared to meet with patients. There's no problem with that. I'll meet with people who want . . . with parents and patients who may want to meet with me. That's not a problem.

But the decision as to what happens with health care facilities in Regina is the decision of the Regina Health Board and I am not going to interfere with their consultation process and their decisions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the same minister. Madam Minister, everyone in this Assembly and nearly everyone in the province is beginning to understand how you're trying to get other people to wear the goat's horns in this province on as far as decisions in health care.

Now, Madam Minister, we're getting there. You're saying that you're prepared to meet with people. What we want from you today, Madam Minister, is not an attempt to pass this off onto the Regina Health Board. We want you, the Minister of Health, to meet with the parents of 800 handicapped children. That's not a big request, Madam Minister, but it's a very important one. Would you give that commitment today?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — I have said in the past that I will meet with parents. And I am going to tell you this, sir: we are moving to community control of health care services in this province because the people of Saskatchewan asked for that. We have made arrangement in our district board legislation to have elected people. You never had the courage to do anything like that when you were in government.

We are looking at more community control, more community involvement in the delivery of health care services. And what we are doing is empowering people

and empowering communities across this province to deliver health care services for their people. And if you look at what the press release from the Saskatoon Health Board yesterday . . . shows how we will reap the benefits in this province by putting more control in the hands of local people who know best what to do for their communities and their citizens.

And I am not, as Minister of Health, going to second-guess every single decision these local people make. It's their decision. I will meet with parents, I will meet with patients, but I will not second-guess the health boards because I trust them and I trust the decisions they make.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the same minister. Let's talk about your health boards, Madam Minister, for a minute. Madam Minister, it's very obvious to people around this province that you and your government don't know exactly what you're doing.

Madam Minister, there's a pretty striking piece of evidence to show that. We have your Premier trot off to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention and say that none of these new initiatives would fall back on the tax base of Saskatchewan, on the property tax base.

Today you and your colleagues were at the SARM convention in Saskatoon. And SARM puts through an emergency resolution today saying that they would like the hospital revenue tax Act repealed.

Now, Madam Minister, they know the difference between union hospital levies and the hospital revenue tax. They know the difference, Madam Minister, and yet they asked you and your Premier, as has SUMA and as has the official opposition, to repeal that tax.

Now why don't you prove to people you know what you're doing and give the commitment to the legislature today that you will satisfy that want and that need of the people that control local government in this province? Would you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to note that there were resolutions at SARM this morning that totally opposed the health care reform in the province and they were defeated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — And the members opposite want to repeal the hospital revenue tax. You know what they want to do, Mr. Speaker? They want to take \$23 million out of the institutional sector. That's what they want to do. Because they know there are limited funds in this province and there's only so much for health care dollars.

And what they want to do by putting that Bill forward is to grab 23 million out of the institutional sector, that's what they want to do. Because they do not come forward with

any recommendations for offsets or alternate funding — just grab 23 million out.

They know we're facing a tough health care budget, they know there's going to be reductions in health care expenditures, and they don't care — take another 23 million out. That's how shallow their analysis is. That's how absolutely politically driven their motives are with respect to health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister used a phrase in the House the other day about smoking things, and I think what she's implying by her response is that SUMA and SARM are smoking the same kind of stuff that she must be. Because SUMA and SARM, Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, understand very clearly the difference. They understand very clearly the difference between union hospital levies and the potential of this particular tax Act to come back on the property taxpayers of this province to pay for your changes to the health system. They know that difference, Madam Minister. And because they know that difference, they're asking you to repeal the Act.

Madam Minister, would you give a commitment today to SUMA and SARM and to the taxpayers of this province, the property taxpayers, that you and your government, before moving on to Bill No. 3, will look at the repeal of that particular Act? Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, we have given a commitment to SUMA and SARM. And we gave it when the Premier spoke to SUMA and that was a commitment — and this morning as well — and that was a commitment to meet with SUMA and SARM and look at alternative financing in the health care system and to review the hospital revenue tax. We've given that commitment and we're in the process of doing that.

The difference between SARM and the members opposite is that SARM is meeting with us and talking about alternatives and working with us to look at alternative financing. They recognize that there is a gap if the hospital revenue tax is pulled.

The members opposite, however, are standing there with blindfolds on, or blinders on, looking at their narrow political agenda, not recommending any alternatives, not engaging in any sort of discussion about how we finance health care into the future, being totally political, totally political.

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the same minister. Madam Minister, you are the individual that stood in this House and trashed the Murray Commission before you'd even read the paper.

Now you talk about politics, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you were the epitome of politics when you sat on this side of the legislature.

Now, Madam Minister, what SARM and SUMA and property taxpayers across this province are saying to you is that they know the difference. Don't try and tell this House that they are one and the same. They know the difference between union hospital levies and the potential of this Act. Before you proceed on Bill 3, Madam Minister, before you use your majority to ram that Bill through this House, they are asking you to consider repealing this potentially harmful Act so that your government can't break this promise the same way you've broken every other one that you committed to in October of '91. Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, it's not this government that trashed the Murray report; it's the members opposite. They threw it in the trash can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — They threw it in the trash can or they put it on the shelf, but they didn't have the courage to do anything. In fact their former minister of Health, George McLeod, even refused to take a position on it — \$1.8 million later, no position, into the trash can. That's what the members opposite did with the Murray report.

With respect to the hospital revenue tax, we have made a commitment to SARM and SUMA, to health care stakeholders, and we have been proceeding on that commitment to look at alternative financing.

You cannot simply grab \$23 million out of the institutional sector without having an alternative in place. And those discussions are taking place. That's the rational approach; that's the reasonable approach; that's the responsible approach to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Future of Whitespruce Treatment Centre

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, we have heard in this House how the NDP (New Democratic Party) intend to close or convert rural hospitals in this province. We've also heard how 800 handicapped children will be affected by the possible closure of a wing in Wascana Rehab Centre. We've heard about cuts to drug plans and dental plans, and the list goes on — cuts that affect people's lives in a dramatic way. And we saw how the NDP reacted to those cuts. Champions of a government of: I don't care.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health regarding the future of another health care facility in this province — the Whitespruce Treatment Centre at Yorkton. Question, Madam Minister. We believe, the opposition has been told, that your government is planning to eliminate this most important facility. Can you tell us at what stage your government is at in this plan? Or can you lay these real concerns to rest and assure us that Whitespruce has not been scheduled for closure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health will be doing a paper on institutional services within the province and how it should break down in the future. And that's going to be coming out very soon, within a few weeks. There is also the budget that we have to look forward to, Mr. Speaker. And I am not going to stand up in the House today and say anything that may or may not be happening in the budget or speak to the institutional paper that is going to be put out in the future. The members opposite will have to wait for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, we can talk about papers and we can talk about the budget, but there are some real concerns in rural Saskatchewan. You and your colleagues applauded the establishment of the facility of Whitespruce. You cheered our government on, Madam Minister, and of course that was while you were on this side of the House. But I am sure even now you recognize the real need for made-in-Saskatchewan substance abuse programs which takes a family approach, Madam Minister.

Unfortunately you haven't offered much hope, Madam Minister. Those aren't assuring words for the people who need this kind of a treatment for their families, or for the many people who work at Whitespruce.

The budget is done, Madam Minister, so we know you have the answer. The answer must be a simple yes or no. Question: does your government have any plans to close or alter in any way the Whitespruce treatment facility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my earlier answer, information with respect to institutions and institutional sector in Regina and across the province will be forthcoming in the weeks to come and the members opposite will have to wait.

I also want to speak to the fact that the members opposite are standing up in this House asking questions without even recognizing the fact that many of the reductions that are taking place across the province, not just in the health care sector but in other sectors, is due to the legacy that they have left this province. It's due to the huge deficit and debt that they have run up that's costing us \$750 million a year interest.

Mr. Speaker, that is half of the health care budget. Can you imagine what we could do with that 750 million a year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, it's clear you don't understand the effect your policies in health care are having on people. If you care about politics, then why throw the blame on somebody else? Are you trying to avoid looking totally hypocritical? You don't seem to care about people. You don't care about the people who work, the employees, nor the people who have been lobbying your government to keep the facility

open.

The question, Madam Minister: will you not lay these concerns at rest? Will you not simply answer the question, or is substance-abuse treatment not a priority of your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Substance-abuse treatment is very important to the government, Mr. Speaker. But let's talk about people who don't care about people. Let's talk about people who took a \$150 million surplus and turned it into a \$15 billion debt. Let's talk about that, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about how they did not care about the future of our children because of the way they mismanaged the funds of this province. And not only our children, the future of our grandchildren and our great grandchildren and our great great grandchildren, because that's the legacy that you've left and that makes it necessary for this government to make tough decisions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plea Bargaining and Early Release Program

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I took notice of a question from the hon. member from Moosomin on March 2 and today I would like to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. The question was:

I'm wondering if the Department of Justice indeed did take the time to consult the Dove family before they entered into this process with the convicted killers.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, a corporal from the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) crime prevention Victim Services Unit was asked by the prosecutor to contact the Dove family and indeed did so on the day on which the accused persons entered guilty pleas, but prior to the announcement of the guilty pleas to the media.

And after communicating the decision in person to Mr. Dove's son in Yorkton, the corporal travelled to Mrs. Dove's residence to discuss the matter with her.

In addition, shortly after that visit, the chief investigator on this file personally telephoned Mrs. Dove and again advised her as to the decision. And this corporal from the Victim Services Unit has had extensive dealings with the Dove family since then, keeping them informed as the case progressed. And he continues to consult with them.

He became involved with the Dove family on the day of Mr. Dove's death and has consulted with them extensively thereafter. He has indicated he was in contact with them at least twice weekly for the first month after the death, and at least weekly thereafter up until this time.

He has assisted in arranging counselling for Mrs. Dove and the family and helped others with other family matters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Increases in Gaming Commission Fees

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Gaming Commission. In September of '92, the minister responsible for the Gaming Commission indicated an increase in licence fees for bingos, raffles, and casinos by some 2 per cent, when indeed that 2 to 4 per cent increase equalled 100 per cent of an increase. Casino licences were increased from 7 to 9 per cent, which equals a 28 per cent increase.

Can the minister tell us for what purposes all of the revenues generated by these increases have been and will continue to be used.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for that question. There were mainly two purposes for the increase in the fees. Fees across government have been increased because of our deficit situation.

The other main purpose for the fee increase was, because of the move to a new association model, more staffing was required to provide assistance in the transition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 13 — An Act to repeal The Mineral Taxation Act

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that An Act to repeal The Mineral Taxation Act be now introduced and read the first time and I'll give an explanation of this Bill in the second-reading stage.

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

Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend the Statute Law

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend the Statute Law be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Limitation of Actions Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Limitation of Actions Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 16 — An Act respecting the Interpretation of Enactments and prescribing Rules Governing Acts

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting the Interpretation of Enactments and

prescribing Rules Governing Acts be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 17 — An Act to amend The Fatal Accidents Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Fatal Accidents Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 18 — An Act to amend The Victims of Crime Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill to amend The Victims of Crime Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 19 — An Act respecting Survivorship

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

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to respond to a point of order made by the member from Greystone. Yesterday the member from Saskatoon Greystone raised a point of order concerning her right to be recognized in question period pursuant to rule 26 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* of Saskatchewan.

Rule 26 has been a standing order of this Assembly since Saskatchewan became a province in 1905. It was borrowed directly from the House of Commons in Ottawa, which, like this Assembly, continues to maintain it in its original form. Oral question period however has a relatively recent origin. Members of this Assembly will be aware that the guiding practices of our question period were shaped largely during the 1970s during a time when there were two opposition caucuses represented in this Assembly.

Out of necessity, the issue of recognition in question period became a matter of concern. In a ruling of the Chair dated March 17, 1976, the Speaker indicated that it would be the Chair's policy in question period to recognize members of the official opposition before recognizing members from other opposition parties.

This ruling and subsequent practice shows that application of rule 26 has been qualified by usage during question period. Given this practice, it is important to

realize that even in question period, rule 26 remains a guiding principle for Speakers when there is competition for the floor.

These situations might involve not only the opposition, but, as well, government private members. In these situations, the Speaker has used his judgement to permit a fair rotation of questioners. Even when rule 26 is applied to debate, Beauchesne clearly indicates on page 137 of the 6th Edition that "... the Speaker is the final authority on the order of speaking ...". But Beauchesne points out that:

The Speaker has traditionally been careful to ensure that an independent ... Member is not overlooked (in any rotation).

I want members to know that I am very conscious of this responsibility and I do monitor the situation in question period in an effort to be fair.

As an example, last session the member for Saskatoon Greystone was recognized to ask the first question on 7 out of 75 question periods, and received eight and a half per cent of the total questions asked.

An Hon. Member: — And now she wants more.

The Speaker: — Order. It is my intention to continue the tradition of this House, which accepts rule 26 as a basic principle, but also recognizes that the rule has been qualified in practice to give the official opposition some preference at the beginning of question period while nevertheless ensuring that other members have fair opportunity to participate.

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Haverstock: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your comments. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in question period the Minister of Economic Development made some remarks that concerned me. And I thought of raising this immediately but I wanted to examine *Hansard* before doing so.

While referring to a comment I made about the government's labour force statistics, the minister accused me on page 210 of *Hansard* of, and I quote, "dishonesty" and "not being honest."

I would like your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on the propriety of the minister's comments, given the February "Statistical Review", page 2.

The Speaker: — I think I will rule on that now, and that's a matter of debate. You're talking about facts and whether or not your facts are correct or his facts are correct. That's not a point of order; that's a point of debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as this relates to the question no. 80, put by the member from Greystone, I

would request it be converted to motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: — I was not able to hear the member, but I think he said: return debate ... Order for return.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, just so I get it straight on the last motion, it was motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: — Motions for returns (debatable).

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — As it relates to ... respond to re: motion for returns (not debatable) 178, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the document.

The Speaker: — Answer tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting Health Districts

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I believe later this day.

The Speaker: — I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Will members just give me a moment here?

The difficulty arose that I couldn't hear the minister's answer, but I think he said later today on item no. 2, Bill No. 3, and leave is not required for that.

Later today.

Bill No. 4 — An Act respecting Local Improvements in Urban and Northern Municipalities and to Effect Certain Consequential Changes

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Local Improvements Act, 1993. This Bill replaces the existing Act which was first enacted in the early 1960s. It has undergone only minor amendments over the years and thus requires an updating to meet the current financial needs of urban and northern municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill results from a long and extensive process of consultation which extended over a number of years. There was consultation with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, with the urban municipal administrators' association, with Saskatchewan cities and with other organizations with an interest in local improvements.

For those not familiar with the term, a local improvement is a work of service undertaken by a municipality which specially benefits particular lands. A local improvement is paid for partly or entirely by a special charge or assessment against the benefited lands.

This Bill is intended to achieve a number of objectives respecting local improvements. It represents a balance of

these objectives. It clarifies and fills in the gaps in the administrative and procedural requirements pertaining to local improvements as well as a role of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

(1445)

This Bill broadens a range of undertakings which may be carried out as a local improvement. At the same time, the principle that local improvements must be specially benefiting is reinforced.

The Bill offers municipalities more choices as to how the cost may be allocated to achieve greater equity and better reflect the degree of benefit received.

The Bill enhances and protects the rights of property owners to be notified of proposed local improvements and to participate in the process leading to their approval. I will highlight some of the changes which have been made to achieve these objectives.

The Bill more clearly sets out the process according to which a local improvement may be undertaken. There will now be three distinct ways in which one may be initiated. First, by petition from landowners requesting it; second, by a municipal council, subject to the rights of owners to petition against it; or third, by a council where it considers the improvement should proceed notwithstanding the owner's views.

Among the procedural changes which have been made to reinforce the public's rights are: lengthening the period for property owners to petition against a proposed local improvement; formally providing an opportunity for owners to petition to initiate a local improvement; clarifying the process and information required for a municipal application to the Municipal Board; requiring preparation of a municipal report on a proposed local improvement; and specifying the information to be included in this; setting out criteria for the Municipal Board's decision to approve a local improvement, in particular that it must specially benefit property owners who are to be specially assessed by part of the cost; and requiring the notice of a proposed local improvement to indicate when council will consider it so owners may appear to make representations and precluding council from acting until the end of the lengthened period for petitioning.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill now clearly states that lands specially assessed for a local improvement must specially benefit from it. This legal principle which involved in the court was not previously included in the Act even though it fundamentally distinguished local improvements from other general municipal works and services. This special benefit is the justification for local improvement special assessment.

The Bill sets out principles for determining the special assessment with a renewed focus on equity and the relative degree of benefit for lands to be specially assessed. The Bill expands the basis upon which special assessments may be levied, or on benefited lands, from not only frontage to include other approaches as well. This is to provide municipalities with greater flexibility

and to help ensure that the allocation of costs equitably reflects a distribution of benefits. Many situations will continue to warrant use of frontage charges, but other options will now be available.

Expanded discretion is provided for a municipal council to assume a portion of the cost of a local improvement if it is considered to benefit the municipality in general as well as benefiting particular property owners. Appeal provisions continue to be included in the Act relating to local improvement special assessments. The notice periods related to these have been lengthened. The Act now specifies a content of notices rather than having the form in the statute.

Appeals are first addressed locally by a municipality's board of revision which reviews special assessments against the requirements of the Act. It does not have the authority to review municipal councils' policy decisions relating to the municipal's contribution to the cost of a local improvement, for example. An owner has a right to further appeal a special assessment to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. In fact, scope for appeals by residents respecting local improvements has been expanded by dropping section 5(4) of the existing Act.

I will say more about this in a moment. There are a number of other changes which will affect municipalities as well. The Bill gives a municipality increased flexibility to adopt various repayment plans, to permit early pay out of an owner's balance due to a local improvement special assessment, to permit either advancing or deferring payment of instalments, and to set terms and conditions relating to these charges to the payments. These changes respond to a request from SUMA for this greater flexibility.

By-laws to fix uniform rates for certain types of local improvements will still be permitted; however, now there must be update from every three years to ensure that the rates are not years out of date and hence unfair. In the case of unusual circumstances, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board will be able to permit higher or now lower rates for particular projects.

Provisions related to unpaid special assessments have been clarified. If unpaid in any year, after December 31 the special assessment is added to and treated as part of the arrears on taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words now about how this Bill responds to a case involving the existing Local Improvements Act referred to in the 1988 report of the Ombudsman. The concerns of the Ombudsman focused on whether a local improvement approved by the then local government board was consistent with the principles that such works should specially benefit properties against which special assessments are imposed.

This Bill specifically defines local improvements as works or services which specially benefit properties to which special assessments are charged. The principle of special benefit will now be directly incorporated in the Act, rather than relying on the interpretation of past court decisions for this basic premise.

The Saskatchewan Municipal Board retains its approving role for local improvements; however it will now be guided by this explicit direction in the Act that a work or service must specially benefit in order to be approved as a local improvement.

In addition, subsection 5(4) of the existing Act, which made anything approved by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board a local improvement, has not been retained. Formerly, this subsection constrained any judicial review of whether a project approved by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board should be a local improvement.

It broadens a range of types of works and services which may be undertaken as local improvements, provided that these can be shown to be specially-benefited properties to which special assessments are charged. It thus expands municipalities' options for improving and financing municipal works and services.

The Bill increases the options available for allocating costs associated with local improvements in order to achieve improved equality.

Lastly, the Bill represents an improvement in terms of the clarity of the procedures to be followed by municipalities for local improvements. I intend to have my department reinforce this by following up the new Act with advisory assistance and an administrative manual to be prepared in consultation with the Municipal Board.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature to join me in supporting this Bill. I move second reading.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the minister and certainly the Bill before us is a Bill that affects a lot of individuals. And I take it from the minister's comments that some consultation, or a fair bit of consultation took place. But I'm quite assured that my colleague, the member responsible for urban development, would like to offer a number of comments and certainly look more in depth at the Bill, and so therefore at this time I will beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 5 — An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of the Bill No. 5, An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983.

The amendments proposed in this Bill reflect our commitment to be responsive to the needs of local governments. The changes are aimed at providing better, more efficient administration of planning issues to assist municipalities and the general public in the implementation of this Act. The amendments have been suggested by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and by municipalities themselves.

We recognize that community planning and

development decisions must consider the availability and adequacy of municipal infrastructure. With development of older neighbourhoods, our municipalities are often faced with inadequate servicing and the cost of upgrading municipal systems.

Mr. Speaker, local governments have expressed the concern that existing provisions on servicing charges do not adequately address the cost of redevelopment projects. They have also suggested that proponents of new developments must pay their share in ensuring a sound municipal infrastructure.

Our government supports the concept of proper planning by and for our communities. Municipalities must have the means to ensure that municipal services are capable of accommodating development. Mr. Speaker, we are therefore making provisions for municipalities with policy plans to charge development levies which would generally be applied to redevelopment of older neighbourhoods.

In addition to revenues such as provincial grants, municipal taxes, and local improvements, these levies will be an important source of municipal financing for ageing infrastructure.

I would stress that municipalities will be required to do their homework in determining fair development levies. Both the private and the public sectors will be required to work together so new developments can continue in a planned manner and not be stymied by deteriorating and inadequate infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments also recognize that municipalities must have the administrative tools and the flexibility in implementing local land use regulations. Municipalities will therefore be able to establish a procedure for dealing with minor variances in their zoning by-laws. This will streamline the development review process and facilitate the issuance of development permits.

Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that administering local zoning by-laws is not without cost. And municipalities should be able to recover administrative costs. The government further recognizes that municipalities are capable of establishing their own fees for administering zoning by-laws and for a subdivision of lands where the municipality is the approving authority.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains amendments which will clarify the type of administrative fees that may be assessed for development on a cost-recovery basis. Fees can be prescribed for development permits, minor variance permits, zoning by-law amendments, and discretionary-use applications.

Mr. Speaker, local governments have often asked for control over the architectural details of buildings. We recognize that architectural control would be of benefit to both the municipalities and development proponents in districts designated for architectural control and municipal zoning by-laws.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill provides amendment allowing municipalities with policy plans to guide architectural detail in such districts. It is to be used to control the physical character of an area or to promote an established theme of an area.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments recognize the role of municipalities in maintaining inner-city residential buildings. Demolition control districts are proposed as zoning techniques will . . . which will provide added flexibility in dealing with development. It will increase local decision-making powers and protect the public interest.

Also, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will permit municipalities with policy plans to designate areas of demolition control in their zoning by-law. They are intended to give municipalities a way of preserving existing housing stock in inner-city areas.

It is our feeling, Mr. Speaker, that good-quality housing, near and in the downtown area, is an important element of promoting social sustainability and wellness in our urban communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing amendments which will allow the local development appeals board to use ordinary mail as a means of serving public notice of appeal hearings. These amendments will provide an alternative to the present use of registered mail or personal service and reduce administrative costs to municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, subdivision approving authority and municipal councils can negotiate agreements with development components. Often these agreements are secured by way of a development caveat on the title of the property. This notifies future landowners of the municipal interest in that property. Amendments will clarify this process so that all development caveats registered under The Planning and Development Act, 1983 are treated in a similar manner.

Lastly we are proposing administrative amendments requiring municipalities to place monies collected through servicing agreements into a separate account from general revenues. Together with the accrued interest, these monies are collected at the time of subdivision and can be expended for specific municipal services. This action parallels proposed amendments for development levies previously mentioned.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill is evidence of our support for local autonomy and it clearly demonstrates our confidence in municipal governments. Councils have a major task in meeting the challenges associated with promoting sound community development. We have a commitment to work with local governments to provide a suitable framework and mechanisms for directing community development. And together with my colleague, the Minister of Rural Development, I would now urge each and every member of this House to support this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and thank the minister for presenting us . . . giving us a better idea of what the Bill represents. Certainly my colleague would like to have some more time just to reassess it before we get into deliberations on the Bill. Therefore I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 8 — An Act to amend The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act and to make Related Amendments to Certain Other Acts

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of the Bill No. 8, An Act to amend The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act. The amendments proposed in this Bill clarify the intent of the Act by defining improved provisions for administration and enforcement. This clarification will assist municipalities, building owners, building designers, and building contractors throughout the province.

These amendments have been suggested and considered by people who use the Act and by people who are affected by the Act. The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act provides for the safety of building users by legislating control over building construction.

The Act requires building owners to ensure that buildings are constructed, renovated, relocated and demolished in conformance with regulations under this Act.

Regulations under the Act set building accessibility standards. Local authorities control building construction within their jurisdiction by administering and enforcing the Act and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains amendments that will designate local authorities for regional and provincial parks. Designation of urban and rural and northern municipalities as local authorities will not change.

Building owners will continue to be responsible for conformance to the building and accessibility standards throughout the province. Local authorities will find improvements in the procedures that are prescribed.

The process for review and for filing of building by-laws will be standardized, based on the zoning by-law model of The Planning and Development Act. Consequential amendments within this Bill will eliminate duplicated provisions in The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and The Northern Municipalities Act, and simplify the local authority's authorization for controlling building construction.

Local authorities will be authorized to request restraining orders from the courts when they have evidence that an owner plans to contravene a building official's order.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Saskatchewan Building and Accessibility Standards Appeal Board have gained sufficient experience in hearing appeals to advise us how

the Act can be approved.

This Bill contains amendments that specify the application procedures and the process for appeal board hearings. The basis for appeal board decisions is better defined to provide fairness to appellants, local authorities, and appeal board members themselves. Provisions will be added to ensure that the decisions on the appeal board are enforced.

Mr. Speaker, the Act currently authorizes licensing of building officials. This Bill contains amendments that will authorize regulations to formalize the licensing requirements and the process, and that will allow local authorities to appoint their own licensed building officials.

Mr. Speaker, regulations under the Act currently adopt the National Building Code of Canada, 1990. The National Building Code is issued every five years. Between editions, revisions and errata are issued to update the standards. This Bill contains an amendment that will implement automatic adoption of these revisions so that improvements to the National Building Code are available to users immediately, without the need to amend the adopting regulations.

Unwanted revisions can be deleted if necessary by amending the regulations. Amendment regulations will still be required to adopt new additions to the National Building Code.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains amendments that will clarify and reinforce the local authorities' position of prime responsibility for eliminating dangers to public safety in buildings.

However, if a local authority does not or is unable to fulfil this duty in the case of inordinate danger, the province will be allowed to take the same actions available to the local authority to alleviate the danger.

The remainder of the amendments amount to housekeeping items such as an addition of definitions and incorporation of accurate titles for enforcement personnel.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill reinforce the right and responsibility of building owners, local authorities and their employees, and the members of the Saskatchewan Building and Accessibility Standards Appeal Board, in their effort to provide safe buildings for the people of Saskatchewan.

These amendments clarify the intent of The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act and make the legislation more useful and usable.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of this Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just say to the minister that the critic is not here today and will be providing that backdrop for the information that we would like to have from you, with his speech. And we

therefore move adjournment of debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Emergency Planning Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, The Emergency Planning Amendment Act, 1993, primarily provides a more sound legal basis for the provincial disaster assistance program. Other amendments are of an administrative or housekeeping nature relating to the structure of the Emergency Measures Organization.

Currently the regulations derive their authority from The Department of Urban Affairs Act. The Department of Justice and the solicitor for the Special Committee on Regulations had advised that The Department of Urban Affairs Act may not provide sufficient local authority to support these regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the regulations authorize the Minister of Finance — the Department of Finance administers the program — to pay compensation to individuals, small businesses, municipalities, and others for uninsured losses related to natural disasters. It is desirable to have legislation that supports the regulations without being associated with municipal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, The Emergency Planning Act is the appropriate vehicle to provide a more sound legal basis for the provincial disaster assistance program.

Other amendments of a housekeeping nature include renaming the existing Emergency Measures Organization to Saskatchewan emergency planning, recognizing that Emergency Measures Organization is now part of a larger department; replacing the reference to executive director appointed by order in council with a reference to the Public Service appointment; and enabling participation of regional and provincial parks in mutual aid areas.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, again there are many areas and a number of technical points that I know my colleague would like to raise on this Bill.

However, Mr. Speaker, whereas both the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and, this morning by way of an emergency motion, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities have called for the immediate repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act, I move:

That the Assembly now proceed to consideration of second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Protect Municipal Property Taxpayers in the Province of Saskatchewan through the repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act.

The division bells rang from 3:11 p.m. until 3:18 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Swenson

Toth

Martens
Boyd
Haverstock

Britton
D'Autremont

Valley Authority Act requires the Authority to allocate fully one-third of its funding to construction of capital projects each and every year.

Nays — 38

Van Mulligen
Thompson
Wiens
Simard
Tchorzewski
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Shillington
Anguish
Solomon
Goulet
Atkinson
Kowalsky
Carson
Mitchell
MacKinnon
Penner
Upshall
Bradley

Koenker
Lorje
Lyons
Pringle
Calvert
Murray
Hamilton
Trew
Serby
Sonntag
Flavel
Cline
Scott
Wormsbecker
Crofford
Stanger
Knezacek
Carlson
Jess

Mr. Speaker, in the earlier and initial construction phases that was an appropriate requirement, and now greater flexibility is required by Wakamow Valley Authority to balance the needs of construction with the needs of maintenance on existing construction. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, section 60 of the Act is proposed to be repealed by this Bill in order to give the Wakamow Valley Authority the desired flexibility to schedule construction work as resources permit, rather than having projects done piecemeal, a little each year in order to meet statutory requirements.

The second amendment, Mr. Speaker, proposed by the Bill, is to section 70. It will be amended . . . is proposed to be amended to reduce the frequency of the mandatory review process of Wakamow's development plan from every five years to every seven years.

Some of the pace of development has slowed, Mr. Speaker. And also given the fiscal and financial squeeze that Wakamow's endured over the last decade and ongoing financial difficulties faced by us all in this province, reducing the frequency of the development plan review makes good financial sense.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition will be reviewing the statements made by the minister and we will conclude our remarks on another day. And therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 11 — An Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 11, which is to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act.

Just in passing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, as the member who proudly represents Moose Jaw Wakamow and now as minister responsible for the Wakamow Valley Authority, I am particularly pleased that my first piece of legislation to introduce into this House is a Bill regarding the Wakamow Valley Authority. And even more pleased, Mr. Minister, that this is a welcome piece of legislation for the Valley Authority in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, this short Bill includes just two amendments which will indeed, and are intended to, provide the Wakamow Valley Authority with added financial flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 and now 11 years, Wakamow has successfully undertaken a number of park development and restoration projects in the Moose Jaw River valley. And the Authority on that count, and all who've been involved with it over the years, are to be highly commended for the work they've done in our community. There are plans in place, Mr. Speaker, for additional projects over the coming years that will be undertaken as the financial resources permit.

Mr. Speaker, the current section 60 of The Wakamow

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that both of these changes have been discussed with the Wakamow Valley Authority. In fact both have been recommended and suggested by the Wakamow Valley Authority. They are in agreement with these proposed changes. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all members of the House would see fit to support this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I therefore move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are going to talk a little bit about the amendments and therefore today we are going to just ask for an adjournment of debate. And so I do that, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 12 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise today and move second reading of a Bill amending The Wascana Centre Act.

I want to first of all say that since its beginning the Wascana Centre Authority idea and concept has become a model for similar kinds of projects throughout this whole country of Canada.

It was one of the first of its kind and it has provided an opportunity for the long-range planning and development of an important part of an inner part of a city, in this case our city of Regina, which has provided opportunities and recreation and green space and beauty for the people of not only this city but everyone who comes to visit Regina. Most people who do, do not lose

the opportunity to come and visit the Wascana Park and the Wascana Authority.

These amendments make a number of changes, most of which have been requested by the Wascana Centre Authority, with a couple that were suggested by the provincial government. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that all have been agreed to by the Wascana Authority.

The Bill includes a repeal of legally redundant provisions relating to boating, since this is a federal jurisdiction, and an amendment to give the Authority a little more flexibility relating to approving temporary improvements or minor buildings valued under \$25,000, even though they may diverge from the Authority's long-term development goals.

There are also amendments, Mr. Speaker, which I want to outline for the information of the members in the House, two of which I want to speak to directly. One is to reduce the frequency of review of Wascana's master plan from every five to seven years, recognizing the maturity of the park at a slower pace of development for financial reasons.

And secondly, to provide authority to include landscape or service facility restoration work in the annual expenditures required by the Act for construction. This recognizes that as a relatively mature park, the focus will be on replacement rather than all new work.

The present provision, Mr. Speaker, is such that the Authority does not have the flexibility to focus more on the restoration and rehabilitation of existing facilities because the legislation requires that a certain portion of the funding be spent on new construction.

It is clear to all of us that, one, the park has developed to a mature state and therefore there is less need for the development of new construction; and secondly, with limited resources, as we all face in all jurisdictions and all kinds of things that we do, there is less money available, and therefore it is important to focus on maintaining the infrastructure and the structure that is there to keep it from deteriorating.

These two changes, Mr. Speaker, were initially suggested by the government. And the Wascana Centre Authority, having considered it, has agreed that they are important and appreciates that these amendments are being brought forward today.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the boundary of the Centre is adjusted slightly to take into account a change in the size of the University of Regina president's residence.

None of these amendments represents a major change in the purposes or operation of Wascana Centre. Some are housekeeping, while others are intended to add financial or operational flexibility at a time in the Centre's development when this is needed.

As I noted, there has been consultation with Wascana's board, which includes representatives of the other two participating partners, the city of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, and the package has the

support and approval of the Wascana Authority.

Mr. Speaker, with these explanatory remarks, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will review the remarks made by the minister responsible for The Wascana Centre Act and we will provide our remarks in return from the individual who's responsible for the critic post of this. And therefore I move the adjournment of the debate today.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, before I introduce the Bill, I'd ask for leave to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to all members of the legislature, four members of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. In particular I'd like to introduce Pat MacKenzie, who is the president of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers; Sheila Brandick, who is the chairperson of the regulations of practice committee; Linda Wacker, past president of the association; and Ray Pekrul, a member of the association.

I would ask all members of the legislature to welcome these guests today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 7 — An Act respecting Social Workers

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 7, The Social Workers Act. This Bill revises and replaces The Registered Social Workers Act which has been in effect in Saskatchewan since 1967.

As Minister of Social Services, I'm particularly pleased to present this Bill which addresses a number of issues that have been identified to me by clients of the department as well as employees and by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers and interested members of the community.

Their collective work has contributed to the legislation that was tabled a few days ago, and this legislation will promote high quality services for the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, The Social Workers Act will help to strengthen and support social work in Saskatchewan. This legislation will enhance the public's confidence and will protect the interests of the public by allowing the

Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers to develop and enforce professional standards for social workers.

Standards will be developed which are based on the social work values of humanitarianism and egalitarianism. Standards will be based on the principle of striving toward equality of social conditions and achieving social justice for all members of our society. These values, Mr. Speaker, I believe, were at the heart of the profession.

The Bill also recognizes social workers' commitments to gain education, skills, and confidence in order to provide meaningful and effective services to the clients. It is my hope that social workers will continue to participate as agents of social change.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill further recognizes that any person engaging in the practice of social work by using the title of "social worker" must be a member of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.

We have not limited the practice of social work to association members. Many of the diverse skills and knowledge required of social workers are shared by other helping professions. For example, individuals may still call themselves counsellors, therapists, and mediators. Licensing provisions of this Act would not apply to them.

There are however, Mr. Speaker, individuals who call themselves social workers and practise social work but do not have specific training. These people have proven their skill and knowledge and they will be offered an opportunity to seek a licence.

In my view, the Bill provides the appropriate balance of protecting the public without placing unrealistic controls and expectations on human service organizations and individuals currently practising in the helping professions.

With the complexity of social problems and social issues facing social workers, now more than ever it is imperative that we strengthen social work in our province.

This legislation is consistent with other legislation in the province in that it allows the professional association to set standards and govern its membership. In order for the association to effectively govern the profession and protect the interest of the public, it must be able to enforce the standards and procedures established in the association's by-laws.

I would like to outline, Mr. Speaker, some of the areas where the association may establish standards in their by-laws. These include registering and licensing members; developing a professional code of ethics; setting standards of professional conduct; proficiency and competency of members; setting standards for continuing education; and prescribing the procedures for investigations and hearings by the professional conduct and discipline committee.

In the event of professional misconduct or incompetence, the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers will now have the authority to discipline social workers. The

discipline provisions in this legislation strike a fair balance between the need to protect the public from professional misconduct or incompetence and the right of the individual social worker to adjust investigation and hearing.

The process provides for investigation of complaints, discipline hearings, and where warranted, discipline resulting from the findings of the hearing. All decisions will be subject to appeal.

The standards and ethics established by the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers will be reviewed and approved by the Minister of Social Services and the Legislative Assembly to ensure that they are in the best interests of the public.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that while this legislation is making its way through the legislature, we will continue to respond to input from human service organizations, union representatives, and interested community groups, as we work with the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers in developing the by-laws.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity last Monday, or this past Monday, to be at a luncheon where the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers recognized one of their fellow workers. And I was impressed by what he said in his remarks to the luncheon, so I would like to conclude my remarks today by quoting him.

And the quote comes from Mr. Ray Pekrul, a Regina social worker who happens to be in the gallery, and who was recently recognized as an outstanding social worker by the Canadian Association of Social Workers.

In his speech, Mr. Pekrul referred to the sideline people of our society and asked, and I quote:

Who are these people? In essence they are part of all of us; categorically, they are the unemployed, the impoverished, the physically and emotionally unhealthy, often the young and the elderly, the young parents raising children alone and the lost adolescent, who are often facing prejudices against them for their gender, race and sexual orientation.

Yet, so much can be done to alleviate the pain, the isolation and confusion of those who are sidelined.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we are initiating an Act which supports the setting and monitoring of standards for professional social workers, the kind of people that Mr. Pekrul represents, and the idea is with the aim of addressing the many needs of Saskatchewan people. This Bill is about making the profession more professional.

I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to move second reading of Bill 7, The Social Workers Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, I beg leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Does the member have leave to introduce guests?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and members. I want to join with the minister to welcome the delegation from the profession of social work, Pat, Ray, Linda, and Sheila. I've known these people for many years as a practising social worker myself. I've been along the way with these folks.

This Bill has been a long time coming, and I want to reinforce what the minister has said that these are dedicated, professional social workers and citizens who have worked very hard over many years to commit themselves to their community and to the clients they work with.

And I want to offer my congratulations to Ray Pekrul, a long-time, outstanding, distinguished social worker in Saskatchewan for the award that you received, and it was well deserved.

So I would ask again that members join with me in welcoming them again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 7 (continued)

Mr. Pringle: — I won't repeat many of the fine comments the minister repeated. I think she hit the highlights of this Bill very well and I know that social workers appreciate the leadership and the support that the minister has provided in coming to this particular point.

I support the Bill as well. And there are many, as the minister said, there are many challenges facing the community, facing our society. The issues are very complex. And the challenge of good, effective social work practice is very great and requires a tremendous amount of effort on the part of the profession and on the part of practising social workers. It's an increasingly complex job.

And it means that with this Bill that, as the minister has said, this will allow for I think greater quality of practice. It will allow for greater accountability to the public for ethical and high quality practice. And it will give the profession, through strength in numbers and more members, a greater potential for research and policy development and for the kind of support that social workers need in the field, so a good support to members.

There are only positive aspects to this Bill, as the minister has outlined. I've been proud to be a member of the Saskatchewan association for the last 19 years. I think the profession has a very positive value base, a high set of principles. This Bill will ensure the accountability that the

public has a right to deserve. And the confidence of the public will be guaranteed and we will be able to provide, as social workers, a high quality practice through the standards that will be set.

And so I take great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, in joining with the minister in supporting this Bill. And I know that it'll receive the support of the House as well. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and speak briefly in support of the Bill that's presented to us, and in support of the many hours of work and dedication of people who have gone out with care and a great deal of concern about the practice of the profession, and those people who are now practising outside the profession but calling themselves social workers as well. And I think the Bill does address that and try and be inclusive to those people and have them come within the mandate of the Act.

I also feel that it is consistent with the broad range of care-givers and professionals that we have in other Acts in health care and so on. And I know with the hard work of the people that have been introduced this afternoon and others who have participated in the process of bringing the Act forward, that they too feel that this will strengthen and support the work that they do, for they are the front line of support to those people who need a great deal of care and compassion.

And the Bill being brought forward shows that we too want to support their work and to provide accountability and the credibility of the profession. I would like to thank everyone involved and add my support to the Bill that's now before us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate the fact that this Bill is a Bill that we want to review. And I'm sure that many on this side will have a number of comments regarding the Bill, just to let the minister, in a review, to see where the Bill is really going, and the recognition of the individuals who are here as well in support of the Bill, just so we know that everyone is served fairly. So at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting Health Districts

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today of rising to move second reading of An Act respecting Health Districts.

Some 30 years ago, Mr. Speaker, our province demonstrated leadership and caring as it introduced a publicly funded universal health system. Through that system this province became the birthplace of medicare in North America and our system became a model for providing quality health care to all.

It removed the financial barrier for people seeking

physician and hospital services. No Saskatchewan resident need fear the potential economic disaster of hospitalization and long-term care. Tommy Douglas recognized that this was only the first step in terms of medicare because more recently he pointed to the need to revamp and reorganize the entire health care system. And he said, that's the tough item; that's the big item.

(1545)

The benefits brought to the residents of this province by our health system are clear. However, the present system must change to better address the health needs of the 1990s and to reflect a broader view of health care, a view which recognizes that health care is more than physicians and hospitals, but that our health is impacted by factors such as poverty, housing, employment, education, and the environment; that these factors all have a role to play in the health of our population.

Mr. Speaker, many people have said, why do we need health reform? Well it has been long understood in this province by people working in the health care area and many other people outside of the health care area that there is a need for health reform.

We have had a whole series of commissions and reports on this very issue. And the similarity of many of the recommendations are quite astounding. But to date we have had absolutely no action. Today, Mr. Speaker, this government is moving ahead with legislation that is going to implement reform that will provide for future generations a high quality health care system and preserve medicare from the ravages that have been wreaked on the financial situation in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Health reform is occurring all over Canada, Mr. Speaker, in virtually every province and territory in this country — virtually every province and territory. And they're proceeding in different ways. In some provinces they are imposing a blueprint on the province, outlining the boundaries, wiping out boards overnight, expropriating them and replacing them with their own board. In some provinces it's been occurring in that fashion.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we chose a developmental and a consultative process. We tabled a vision paper on August 17, 1992 and we spent the next six months talking with people at the grass roots levels and meeting with thousands and thousands and thousands of people across this province.

And we asked them what their concerns were. We listened to what their concerns were. And many of their concerns are dealt with in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. We took their advice and we consulted.

And let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan know much better than the members opposite that health reform is necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The people of Saskatchewan understand the very urgent need for us to proceed with health reform if we are to preserve medicare for future generations. They understand that. The members opposite of course would like to bury their head in the sand as they did when they trashed the Murray report in the trash can.

Mr. Speaker, let me just itemize some of the reasons why we need health reform in Saskatchewan and indeed across Canada. There is a lack of service integration and coordination which results in the fragmented delivery of services in our system. And there are gaps in the system with people falling in those gaps.

There is a lack of community participation in and control of health resources, and we need to rebalance the roles of government in community in the health care sector. We need to rebalance governance responsibilities.

The members opposite in one hand, Mr. Speaker, will scream and holler that you're not giving community control, and on the other hand they say, why aren't you making the decisions? Why do you let the health board make the decisions?

And there's an inconsistency in their approach, and the reason why there's an inconsistency, Mr. Speaker, is they've never had a vision. And they don't have a vision today. It's political expediency, and it changes from minute to minute, Mr. Speaker.

In the health care system there has been an overemphasis on institutions and institutional care and expensive equipment, Mr. Speaker, which overshadows community-based services and preventative programming. Something like only 2 per cent of the health care budget in Canada is spent on health promotion and disease prevention — only 2 per cent. By far a huge amount of money is spent on institutional services.

Now it is extremely important for us to maintain high quality institutional and acute care services, but we must rebalance the emphasis so that more emphasis is put on health promotion, disease prevention; more emphasis on community-based services like home care; and more emphasis on other things that impact on our health such as the environment, such as education, such as housing, such as your economic situation, Mr. Speaker. Those things must become a part of the vision for health care.

Mr. Speaker, there are structures in place in Saskatchewan, for example, in the health care system that encourage user dependency on the system and do not empower people to take more responsibility for their own health care where it is appropriate. And I say where it is appropriate because there are people in Saskatchewan, because of their particular illness, who cannot take that responsibility.

But by far the majority of people in this province can take more responsibility for their own health care and they should be empowered to do that rather than to be encouraged to be dependent on the system.

The health reform attempts to address that, Mr. Speaker.

There have been dramatic social and economic changes in society since the early 1960s. We know that today most of the illnesses that we suffer from are as a result of lifestyle and living conditions. We know that, Mr. Speaker, and our health care system has not adapted to meet those specific challenges. And through the health care reform, we are focusing attention on those needs.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there has been no real analysis of health outcomes in the health system in Saskatchewan or across Canada, that money is poured into the system without us determining what the health outcomes are. We know that other countries spend more than we do on health care and have a better health status than we do in Canada.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, for Saskatchewan people to stand back, take a long, hard look at the health care system and determine what our health needs are and focus our funding on where the needs are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — In the last 10 years, Mr. Speaker, we spent some 489 million on capital construction in this province, which increased our operating budget by some 80 million. And we only use a fraction of that rated bed capacity, Mr. Speaker. It is time for us to address these inequities in the health care system, and the health reform proposes to do that.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, follows "A Saskatchewan Vision for Health," which was released on August 17 and which has been discussed in all corners of this province. I have personally attended meetings at Langenburg, meetings at Shaunavon, meetings at Neilburg, meetings in other parts of the province in communities that did not expect to see a Health minister, I must say, Mr. Speaker.

We have been out talking to people at the community level, at the grass roots level about the vision for reform, and this legislation embodies many and addresses many of their concerns. The vision outlines a framework for the revitalization of our province's health system — a revitalization, Mr. Speaker, which is following the same caring and leadership our province demonstrated some 30 years ago.

One of the key points of the vision, Mr. Speaker, is the involvement of Saskatchewan residents and health service providers in a partnership with government — a partnership to plan, deliver, and manage our health services. One important part of this partnership is the reform of the health service delivery system.

And I want to speak about this partnership because as we've moved through health reform we have had meetings with doctors and nurses and CNAs (certified nursing assistants) and SASCH (Saskatchewan Association of Special Care Homes) and SHA (Saskatchewan Health-Care Association) and home care and other health care providers sitting at the same table and developing health reform for the province and giving us their input, giving us their ideas, expressing their concerns.

And this has been an ongoing process since we formed government, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of partnership we need as we rebuild this province and rebuild our health care system to preserve medicare for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — And the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have tried their level best to destroy these initiatives and to undermine the work of these people. They tried their level best to attempt to destroy the work of hundreds of health care providers throughout this province. And they are trying their level best to destroy the work of some 35 planning groups that are out there working right now — people who are health care providers, people who sit on municipal governments. They are trying their best to destroy the last nine months of work that these people have put into the process of health reform.

They say that we're pitting community after community. And let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I am enheartened by what has happened in our communities in the last six months. Communities and people from all walks of life have come together across Saskatchewan, have talked about what health reform means to them, and have talked about their future and how they could develop a district and move to a more wellness-oriented health care system in their area. They have been meeting; community with community. They've been cooperating and they've been participating.

But instead of the members opposite recognizing that this is the spirit of cooperation that has made Saskatchewan so successful, instead of them recognizing it, they are trying out there to drive wedges in between these communities. They are trying to destroy the health reform and pit communities after communities. It's not us who're pitting communities after communities. We're encouraging cooperation. They're disseminating rivalry and fighting amongst communities. That's their objective and that's the Tory way, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say once again that I am extremely enheartened, extremely enheartened by what I've witnessed across this province by people — those members excluded — from all political stripes, from all walks of life, working together to do what's right for future generations, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Reform of our health system, Mr. Speaker, includes the creation of health districts. The health districts are one of the first building blocks. The health district legislation, Mr. Speaker, is enabling legislation that allows boards to amalgamate together under one board.

It's not the final answer to health reform. It only sets the stage, the framework for the building blocks to be laid, the building blocks which will allow our community-elected boards to move to a health care system that is much broader, more comprehensive, and that provides a more well-rounded health care system for the people of

Saskatchewan. Today in this legislation we are putting forward a mechanism for the building blocks to be established to take us toward our goal of a health system based on wellness.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — This legislation will allow communities to come together and to form districts based on a number of factors of importance to them, such as population, and trading and commuting patterns. District formation will allow for an increased role for local involvement in the health system, and allow the system to become better integrated and more flexible, and the flexibility, Mr. Speaker, will allow for development and implementation of more community-based health programs.

For the first time in the history of Saskatchewan what we will have are boards that will have the flexibility within global funding, Mr. Speaker, to meet very specific needs that may arise in their communities, to address specific problems. These boards will be a single point of entry in the health care system, so the gaps and the fragmentation can be reduced. This will be a first, Mr. Speaker, in the history of this province and a first in the history of Canada, because many of the other boards that are established only deal with institutions in Canada and not with comprehensive health care services.

(1600)

The importance of this reform to our health system obviously requires new and innovative legislation, legislation which will allow for a system of community-controlled health service delivery, a system which is unprecedented in Canada and places Saskatchewan at the forefront of health service development.

The Health Districts Act is enabling legislation. It promotes the integration of services through the creation of health districts and district health boards. Integration is encouraged through the amalgamation of existing health corporations such as union hospitals, home care boards, special care homes, and ambulance boards, with district health boards.

This integration, Mr. Speaker, will bring real benefits to the health system by moving many hundreds of fragmented health delivery structures into 25 or so integrated, coordinated boards — boards which have a clear mandate to effectively plan for and deliver a full range of health programs.

And I want to say this. The Saskatoon Health Board put forward their plan in Saskatoon yesterday, and I encourage the members opposite to take a look at it. Because what we have is a health board that has provided a plan for all of the health care services in Saskatoon and area, that has reprioritized funding to start providing such services as suicide prevention and other services in the system, other community-based programing.

We have a health board that has come forward . . .

An Hon. Member: — Two hundred thousand dollars coming out of the property tax there too.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — And the member from Morse is shouting from his seat because he can't stand the fact that the Saskatoon Health Board is so successful. He can't stand the fact that the vision for health care is already shining through in the Saskatoon Health Board. It is moving to a much broader, more comprehensive form of health services. It's making the tough decisions it has to make to get there, and it has a plan before the people. And it's done it with massive consultation.

Never before in the history of these folks being in government has this kind of process been embarked upon. They never had the courage to go to the people. For 10 years they tried to integrate health services in Saskatoon, and they failed, Mr. Speaker. They failed.

Why did they fail? Because they didn't have the leadership and they didn't have the courage to do it. And within months of this government being in power, we had a Saskatoon Health Board in that was doing exactly what they failed to do for 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, this legislation reflects what the people of Saskatchewan, particularly those involved in the health care system, have asked for. This Act is based on extensive consultations that have taken place throughout the province.

In recent weeks an additional message has been coming through from the people of Saskatchewan. That message was the need for more direction — more direction and detail regarding how districts will be formed, the structure of district boards and their roles, local contributions to health, and other important issues. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, provides that direction.

Specifically, it allows for the creation of health districts and district health boards. It prescribes the make-up of district health boards, with the majority of members being elected by district residents through a ward system. It provides for the amalgamation or merger of existing health corporations with health boards to better integrate and coordinate service delivery. It prescribes the powers and duties of district health boards, which includes the ability to plan, manage, and deliver health services to district residents. It allows municipalities to enter into voluntary funding arrangements with district health boards. And it ensures that district boards are accountable to both district residents whom the boards serve and the provincial government which provides most of their funding.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there are several important features of this legislation related to what it does not do. This Act does not provide district health boards with any property taxation powers, in keeping with a recent commitment made by the Premier in his address to the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.

The Premier also undertook a review of the community

contribution to health care that is presently in place, some \$23 million, and those consultations and that review is now taking place.

This Act does not predetermine health district boundaries. We are asking communities to come together and to develop health districts as much as possible through consultation with their adjacent communities. It does not affect existing health-provider labour agreements, which must be honoured by district health boards; nor does it require private health corporations to amalgamate with district health boards, in recognition of the unique character and mission many of these corporations bring to our health system. Of course, we will be encouraging them to amalgamate, but it doesn't require it. And where we have encouraged this amalgamation in the province it has taken place, in some cases with very little encouragement from us.

The importance of this legislation to the people of Saskatchewan and to our health system, Mr. Speaker, cannot be understated. It represents a fundamental shift in the nature of health service delivery. It empowers people to take direct control of the health system and to plan and manage the delivery of health services to their own communities, and it presents a balanced and workable approach to health reform that best meets the concerns and needs of both the health providers and the people who rely on health services.

Since August, communities throughout Saskatchewan have begun working together, discussing how they can best shape a health-delivery system which will take this province into the 21st century.

It is important however, Mr. Speaker, to remember that health reform is not an end in itself. Health reform is a means to achieve our goal. Our real goal is a system that is more wellness oriented. To achieve wellness, we need a health system where wellness can be nurtured, indeed where it will flourish.

We need a system that is more coordinated and integrated to deal with the problems that I've indicated to you, and a system that is capable of providing a broad range of comprehensive services within a district. And we are working to set in place the structure that will promote and sustain wellness and allow us to achieve our goal, a system based on wellness that will result in improved health for Saskatchewan people.

Clearly we can be doing more to meet the health needs of Saskatchewan residents. I am confident that the same community spirit of innovation and caring demonstrated throughout this province some 30 years ago remains today. And, Mr. Speaker, that spirit will guide us as we shape the next generation of health service delivery in Saskatchewan. And the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, were on the wrong side last time around and let me tell you, they're on the wrong side again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, as I move second reading of this Act, I encourage, I encourage all members of this Assembly to join with me to support this legislation

and the improvements it will bring to our health system. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've been sitting here listening to the Minister of Health espouse all the virtues of the Bill she's bringing to this House, it begs me to wonder which side of the fence the minister was on when she was on this side of the House in opposition. And all the promises and innuendoes that were made by her in opposition, the accusations that were levelled at the government of the day in trying to bring control into the health care system and bring a sense of reason to health care in this province, certainly one begins to wonder what transformation has taken place in the minister's life.

The minister used the term grass roots. And I had a colleague at home suggest to me that grass roots isn't a very sound expression to be using, as coming from a rural background he suggests that grass roots, where do the roots develop? They develop in the ground. And it would seem to me that the type of legislation and health initiatives being taken today, people of Saskatchewan are feeling more than happy and really elated with what's taking place, they feel more like they're being trodden upon.

The minister talked very glowingly this afternoon of the fact that regional boards will be elected. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, what do we find? Eight elected, eight elected. However, that's fine. We appreciate that, and we don't disagree with the elected members. But what about the six government appointees?

Mr. Speaker, if this is going to be a totally open and honest board, a board that's going to really be able to act in consideration of the concerns in their region, why isn't the board totally elected? Why are there any provincial appointees whatsoever?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that yes, communities want to be involved. But from what I've heard, Mr. Speaker, over the past number of weeks and months, many communities really don't feel like they have been involved. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they've been led to believe that the system is in place, and you either do it our way or no way.

And the feeling is out there, people just don't really know where the government is coming from today. Even this Bill doesn't leave people with much of an assurance that this government knows where it is going in health care other than to say to rural Saskatchewan that rural Saskatchewan really doesn't count any more — many communities.

And we raised the concerns in question period today, even the concern regarding the facility at Whitespruce which when it was introduced and when it was constructed, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House, present members when in opposition, talked about the virtues of a treatment centre for addicts here in this province — a treatment centre where you treated the whole person and had their families involved rather than just individuals so you could really address the concern.

Mr. Speaker, as well, I just want to remind the minister. Was it wrong to bring to the minister's attention? Was it wrong to put the thousands of dollars into Wascana Rehab Centre, to build a facility that could meet the needs of individuals, men and women and children across our province? Was it wrong to do that?

The Assembly adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Was it wrong, Mr. Speaker, to design and build care home facilities, 2,400 care home beds across this province in rural Saskatchewan, in urban Saskatchewan, in Regina, in Saskatoon? Was it wrong to provide the opportunity to provide those beds for our seniors who have devoted themselves and worked so diligently over the years to develop this province? Was that wrong, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, what about the health card? It seems to me many people across this province really appreciate what the health card has done for them. And there's so many other areas and avenues that it could be that card . . . with which that card could be used to address some of the conceptions out there that certainly the health system is being abused. There are many opportunities. What is the government doing with the . . . Maybe looking at further expanding the use of the health card system beyond the purchase of drugs into medical appointments, Mr. Speaker.

I think there are a number of areas that we as opposition members would like to bring to the government's attention regarding the Bill. And certainly I believe this Bill has opened up a lot of doors for us to debate. And so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, before I adjourn the House for the day, I wonder if I could make a point of order.

The Speaker: — Point of order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Actually I have two of them. First of all, just to remind members that the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation is having a reception here in the building. And seeing as we're adjourning a few minutes early today it might be a good idea if we could drop by their display and see some of the good works that are being done by that organization.

Secondly, on another point of order, I listened carefully to the independent member raise the issue of words that I spoke yesterday. The word in particular was "dishonest," and I would like to withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: — Let me first of all make a . . . By the way, the first point of order was not a point of order; it was a point of information.

The second one was a good point of order and I want to thank the member for withdrawing those words. And I have also looked at the transcript. Yesterday at the time the member made the statement I did not hear those words clearly. And I want to thank the member for withdrawing that particular unparliamentary word.