

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted this morning on behalf of my good friend and colleague, the member from Swift Current, to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly and seated in your gallery 22 grade 8 students from St. Joseph's Middle School in Swift Current.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Kelly Hammond, and their chaperons Ms. Kathy Wasiak, Mr. Ted Lambert, and Mr. Ken Seymour.

Now I've had the privilege of meeting with schools from Swift Current before, and they're just a great bunch. So I'm really looking forward to talking to you. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming them here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join with the member from Lumsden in welcoming the people here from St. Jo's in Swift Current. And I know that some of them are from my constituency and I want to welcome them as well.

I know Mr. Seymour is from my constituency and I want to welcome him here as well. So I'd ask the Assembly to join with me again and welcome him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our guests today are going to get many official welcomes and acknowledgements, primarily because each one of us here, I'm sure, has seen Swift Current, Saskatchewan, as an extremely important and significant place from which to come.

I was born and raised in Swift Current and am delighted to see all of you here today. When I was growing up there I never thought the day would come where I would be in this Legislative Assembly, so some of you some day may be here as well. I hope you find our deliberations interesting. Thanks for coming.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Canadian Farmers Curling Championship

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to rise today in the House, Mr. Speaker, to announce that we have in Saskatchewan another Canadian curling championship team.

I want to pay tribute and congratulate a curling team from Govan, Saskatchewan. The team, consisting of skip Reg Lakness, third Leonard Kelln, second Don Dabrowski, and lead David Jones, won the Canadian Farmers Curling Championships that were hosted by the Melville Country Club.

The Canadian Farmers Curling Championship is sponsored nationally by BASF Canada Ltd. and provincially by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Participating teams advanced by winning their regional playdowns at 14 Saskatchewan curling clubs throughout Saskatchewan in November, December, and January.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Govan and district should be very proud, as we are, to be home of another Canadian championships. And we again say congratulations and wish them all the best in their farming this summer and in their curling next winter. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pultz Aviation

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to comment this morning on the opening of a promising and plausible and I think very reasonable aviation business in my riding in Saskatoon.

Pultz Aviation has begun operations in February, operating out of Mitchinson Flying Service at the Saskatoon airport. Greg Pultz announced his plans to begin manufacturing small, economical, recreational aircraft and has already made his first sale of a Twinstar Mark III. The firm will also be offering quite economical flight training on the Twinstar aircraft, in Saskatoon.

This family, Mr. Speaker, the Pultz family, has been well respected in the aviation community in Saskatoon since 1965. So it gives us every confidence that the new firm will make a very valuable contribution to our economy. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this is the kind of initiative we really need in Saskatchewan. And I know all members will want to join with me in congratulating the Pultz family on this venture and wishing them the very best.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gull Lake Marketing Workshop

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce a fine example of cooperation between governments and the local community, an example which has to happen if our economy in our province is to prosper. On Monday, March 21, the town of Gull Lake is hosting a workshop called: where is the customer? — marketing in the '90s.

This workshop is for entrepreneurs and small-business

operators in the area. This workshop will examine existing barriers to marketing and will look at marketing local products, and beyond south-western Saskatchewan. The workshop will be funded by the partnership agreement on rural development, a cost-shared, federal-provincial initiative to develop new economic opportunities in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the organizers of the workshop. I believe it demonstrates what we all know, that cooperation takes us further along the road to success than narrow divisiveness. Thank you.

Spring Bird Migration

Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well after a long, cold winter we are all looking forward to spring, and I'm happy to report that indeed spring is here.

The beginning of the spring bird migration is under way with Canada geese, crows, marsh hawks, and bluebirds being observed. Other signs of spring reported include gophers up and about following their winter hibernation. And on south-facing hillsides the furry crocus buds are emerging from the recently thawed ground. Great horned owls which do not build their own nests have selected old hawk and crow nests and are now laying eggs.

Bird migration has fascinated man since the beginning of time. At one time it was thought that birds hibernated in mud at the bottom of the ponds. We now know that birds use landmarks — the sun and stars and the magnetic North Pole in navigating between breeding and wintering grounds.

Bluebirds will return to nest in the same nest box year after year. Many warblers and sparrows invariably migrate on cloudy nights. Some small birds expend upwards of 50 per cent of their body weight in crossing large water bodies. They arrive on shore exhausted and many fail to make the trip and perish in the water.

A mallard duck banded in Regina was shot in Nebraska two days later, a distance of 900 miles. A family of whooping cranes with a radio transmitter attached to their six-month old youngster flew non-stop for 23 hours, covering a distance of 1,100 miles.

As we discover more about bird migration, we are increasingly impressed by the abilities of our feathered friends. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that spring is almost here. And we know that for four reasons: (1) The calendar says March 20 is the spring equinox; (2) it is gradually getting warmer and the snow is melting; (3) as the member from Indian Head-Wolseley said, life is returning to the Prairies; and (4), Mr. Speaker, the defenders of truth and the public's right to know, our local media, are having a

field day reporting on the disasters that come with the spring.

A recent sample, Mr. Speaker, from yesterday's *Leader-Post*, "Lake stench a sign of spring". One of the television stations recently reminded us that spring is the harbinger of the mosquito season. We have also heard about the coming dead-fish smell, the algae stink and the potholes.

Mr. Speaker, I am a politician so crusading reporting doesn't affect me. But I do sometimes wonder who did what to the media's cornflakes. Surely, truth is deeper than the bottom of Wascana Lake and as varied as the number of birds in the park and in the press gallery.

I suppose though, crusaders being what they are, we can look forward to stories of drought, sunburn, food poisoning at picnics, and this one from the prophet Mandryk: hypocritical politicians take credit for extra hours of sunlight. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

North-West Saskatchewan Business Climate

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development this morning. And, Mr. Minister, the folks in north-west Saskatchewan are facing a very difficult situation as spring rolls around in that part of the world. They are having trouble keeping their businesses going. The next-door province, Alberta, is busy selling itself again as usual and promoting its advantages as a good place to do business. And at the same time, people are promoting the Saskatchewan disadvantage to their own ends.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering what kind of damage the growing inequities between Saskatchewan and Alberta are causing Saskatchewan small business and can you report to the Assembly what percentage of business is being driven into Alberta. I'm sure there must be statistics kept on the issue as business flees this province. Would you tell us that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the government has been working hard with local communities to develop regional economic development authorities. Only recently, I believe last week, we were in Rosetown for the opening of the entrepreneurial economic development authority in Rosetown — a great deal of excitement.

You will have heard of the reopening of Imp-Pak Packaging, a failed deal of the previous government, in Swift Current. There is the recent Canamino announcement, Sears Canada moving to Regina, and literally many, many businesses that see Saskatchewan as a great place to do business. There are many partnerships and alliances being formed between labour and business.

The only people who seem to be out of sync with this

new partnership and the positive atmosphere for business in Saskatchewan are the Tories opposite and the Leader of the Liberal Party, who continually whine and complain about what a terrible place Saskatchewan is.

And it's hard to understand how your approach to economic development . . . or maybe it isn't so surprise, given what happened in the 1980s. But one thing is sure, is that your style of economic development will not be seen in this province again for many, many years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, instead of flying around the world, why don't you take a run up in the north-west part of our own province for a change and do your job?

I'd like to send across to the minister a copy of an ad that is appearing in newspapers and billboards all over western Saskatchewan, north-western Saskatchewan. Give that to the minister, please.

Mr. Minister, the city of Lloydminster is taking full advantage of the Saskatchewan disadvantage. The Lloyd Mall, who are being good entrepreneurs, on the Alberta side have launched a massive promotional campaign in north-west Saskatchewan, extolling the fact that their province is the place to go. They put out this ad which says: "Hop the border, it's far less taxing." There's a picture of a big, large bunny jumping from Saskatchewan to Alberta. And the mail-out says: "Just by being here, you've already saved 9 per cent."

Now, Mr. Minister, your taxation policies are making it difficult for Saskatchewan retailers to compete, particularly near the Alberta border. What is your government prepared to do to counter the Saskatchewan disadvantage which is now being promoted by Alberta retailers? What are you doing, sir?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I was in Toronto recently, speaking to business people. And their comment was, is: the only disadvantage Saskatchewan has is the \$15 billion debt left by that administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, other than that, they believe Saskatchewan is a great place to do business. They like the approach of the government. They believe that there's a good working relationship between labour and business. Even though the members opposite in their recent vote on the labour standards would indicate they would like to have a bigger war going on, it's hard to imagine how that is good for economic development. But they insist on doing that.

And surprisingly, the member from Greystone, the

Leader of the Liberal Party, voting against the labour standards has surprised a great number of working people, especially women in this province, as to that approach.

I want to say though that I have an article here from a paper in north-western Saskatchewan which says "Alberta no role model for Saskatchewan". And in the *Northern Pride* it goes on to say that:

Incidentally, while many people from Saskatchewan are going west to shop, I've been asked by friends in Alberta to smuggle booze in the opposite direction.

Now I say if this is the kind of regime that you're talking about setting up, I say to you, Mr. Member, that you are wrong on your economic development as surely as you were in the past 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, it's not my economic development, it's yours that the people in the north-west are hopping mad about, Mr. Minister. In Meadow Lake, the local paper publishes a picture of a large billboard put up just on the southern edge of town and I quote:

The merchants of Meadow Lake are very unhappy with this billboard which showed up south of town this week. It would seem to a casual onlooker that there is a thumbing of the nose at the provincial government with very little they can do about it.

Well, Mr. Minister, you're the guy in charge. You're the guy that has meant 12,000 less jobs in the province since you took power. You're the guy that is responsible for 78,000 people on the welfare rolls; and you're the guy that is responsible for Saskatchewan people shopping in Alberta in massive numbers, and retailers feeling the pinch.

Now, Mr. Minister, will you start solving the problem by first recognizing that there is one and then start addressing your oppressive taxation regime to do something about it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I will not re-read the editorial from the *Edmonton Journal* which talks about some of the new policy in Saskatchewan that sets us in a better position than Alberta. But you will recall yesterday, the Minister of Labour referring to that.

I want to say as well to the member opposite who seems to believe that nothing they did — the \$15 billion deficit — has created any problem for business in Saskatchewan, he certainly has not talked to the president of the chamber of commerce and other business people in this province, who say the biggest problem we have is the \$15 billion in debt left by that

member, in particular, while he sat around the cabinet table and was minister of SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation), and all of the bad deals that were done by that organization.

And if anything, Mr. Member from Thunder Creek, I am tired — sick and tired — of going around cleaning up the messes in SEDCO which you personally were involved in as minister of that economic development . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. As usual, from this minister we get a dose of inflamed political rhetoric.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, the problem isn't me; the problem is your policies.

Now we'll give you a quote from a letter which your Minister of Finance just received. It's from a mayor of one of the towns involved. It says:

We appreciate that you understand and have sympathy for the problem; you have told us that on several occasions. However your sympathy does not compensate for lost sales and businesses going out of business. Now it is time your government did something to solve the problem.

Mr. Minister, the letter says it all. Instead of responding to me with your inflamed political rhetoric, respond to the mayor of a town who is losing his business district. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say again to the member opposite, that your sanctimonious approach to the problems of the deficit and the reason why we have problems in Saskatchewan on the debt side, is amazing to most people in the province.

Never once have you stood in your place and said, look we have caused a huge problem for businesses and families in Saskatchewan because of the huge debt that we ran up, much of it because of our ill-conceived economic development plan — Rafferty, Gigatext, and on and on the list goes — is the reason why we have a problem with the debt which is, I say again, the biggest problem businesses in this province face.

But let's look at Alberta's budget, which you are saying is the way to go.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Vehicle Inspection Program

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), and it has to do with the new vehicle inspection program which is

coming into effect on April 1.

Mr. Minister, while we certainly agree with the intent of the new program, to ensure that vehicles being driven on Saskatchewan's roads are roadworthy, there may be some problems, serious problems, with the implementation of this legislation.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me, when a vehicle is brought into Saskatchewan from another jurisdiction and sold to a used car dealership, whose responsibility is it to pay for the inspection?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I thank the minister for agreeing with the intent. The intent is to look at the whole issue of safety, and it is also the intent of possibly saving lives. And I thank him again for raising that.

In regards to implementation, of course during an implementation period you're always going to learn something as you go about implementing. And I do agree in that sense, that we will learn something through the implementation process and the issue of going about our business in that sense.

On the issue of responsible, of course the person is responsible for paying the inspection itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, you didn't answer the question as to whose responsibility it was. You have a responsibility for one and one Crown corporation only. This is a policy question dealing with SGI and you don't seem to be able to answer it again. I can get more information from an SGI brochure.

Mr. Minister, it's my understanding that the dealer is responsible to ensure that the vehicle is inspected. And from talking to some car dealers along the Alberta border, I have learned that it poses something of a problem because it makes Saskatchewan dealers uncompetitive with those in Alberta. And as the Leader of the Opposition just pointed out, the last thing we can afford in this province is to be even less competitive with Alberta.

Mr. Minister, why is it that the dealers are responsible for paying for these inspections?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I notice that the member was talking about dealers in Alberta, etc. And I think that you would be surprised to know that many of the people in the province of Saskatchewan that I know of that we have met with was very supportive of this plan.

And the member should know that they were in government all these years and didn't do absolutely nothing about this issue. And here we are in government, we do something positive, and all we get is negative comments, you know, from these people. I think they should be very supportive of this issue of

safety which we have introduced in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is a supplement, to the minister of SGI.

Mr. Minister, I've spoken to a car dealer at Richmond, Saskatchewan, who tells me that he has two options once these new regulations come into effect on April 1. He can either buy the equipment to do the inspection himself — and the computerized four-wheel alignment machine alone will cost him at least \$35,000, perhaps more, and there could be other equipment that he will need as well, so that's just a start of the cost — or he can take the vehicles to Swift Current where there may be a testing station. That's 140 miles and that's probably up to around the 200 kilometres which he tells me will cost him hundreds of dollars for each vehicle, that he has to pass on when he sells that vehicle.

Mr. Minister, many dealers in small communities simply cannot afford this kind of cost and still hope to be competitive with dealers just across the border. Now perhaps you realize that they don't have this cost. So maybe you should talk to the member from Lloydminster-Cut Knife and ask her about her town where she's exempt from most of the Saskatchewan problems that we have and get some counsel from her.

Mr. Minister, what is being done to offset the cost of your new policy on Saskatchewan car dealers for the rest of the province besides Lloydminster?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been dealing with this issue with many of the car dealers and we had received input on what was the best policy. The policy that is in place is the one that was presented through consultation. But if there are any specific issues of problems that are related to it, we will take them, you know, as are presented.

So if a member has a real specific concern about a particular area, I suggest that he send it as a concrete, specific issue to me and we will deal with it in that way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly, Minister, we will bring you the specific issues but reality is, though, that the policy of your whole approach in this matter is the problem for the whole province. It has implications of competitiveness for Saskatchewan businesses and it needs to be done in conjunction with other provinces.

Now we support the general concept of safety on our roads and we don't want to have that misinterpreted. However, Mr. Minister, could you tell us what discussions you have had with your counterparts in Alberta and Manitoba. Have you spoken to them about implementing a similar policy in those provinces?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think in regards to what the other provinces, what the Klein government decides to do or what the government in Manitoba wants to do, I mean that's their business. Our top issue over here is that the issue of people unknowingly purchasing unsafe or stolen vehicles was brought to our attention and we acted upon it. If they want to act in the same fashion as we do, etc., so much the better for everybody.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Board Funding

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health today. Madam Minister, there seem to be major discrepancies, not simply minor differences, in your funding formula for district health boards. If one compares Regina and Saskatoon, as an example, the Regina Health District's funding increased by 1.5 per cent and Saskatoon's fell by some 7 per cent. They have a 7 per cent funding shortfall, is to be more accurate.

How do you explain the fact that Saskatoon, which is a larger city than Regina, with three hospitals and 18 long-term care facilities, will be subject to a funding differential of this magnitude?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — To be accurate, Mr. Speaker, the budget with respect to Saskatoon, I think, is minus 1.2, not in the 7 per cent as the minister . . . as the member opposite says. The minus 7 per cent has to do with a deficit that the Saskatoon Health Board has; that's what she's referring to, not to this year's budget.

With respect to the budgets, I have said repeatedly that we are moving to a formula that's based on population and is based on needs as opposed to funding institutions only. There are a number of factors being taken into consideration in estimates, because it's quite complex. I will give the member more details about that funding formula.

It results in more equity throughout the province because as we analyse the province, we find that some districts have much more health care funding, regardless of their population and their needs, than other districts. We must move to a more equitable situation, and the funding formula is attempting to achieve that. And that accounts for the discrepancies between Regina and Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I hear you saying that we're talking about equity here. And I find it very, very interesting that you would find it acceptable that somehow Saskatoon is undeserving of having some of the beds that they have and that somehow you think that there are beds empty, that they can do without. It shocks me.

Rural communities had to threaten court action to get you to understand their concerns. And now the people that you claim to appreciate so very much in Saskatoon feel that they're being kicked in the shins with this recent directive that's been visited upon them.

Madam Minister, we have received several phone calls from people who are absolutely stunned that you would give the Saskatoon Health Board and its affiliate care homes just three weeks notice to make arrangements that will have a lifetime impact on the ability to care for seniors, not simply of Saskatoon but from all over Saskatchewan, many of whom of course are being cared for in Saskatoon.

You kept the health boards waiting and waiting for their funding formulas. The only clues that they had were in your budget. How do you expect people to make these staggering changes overnight?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the member opposite knows it's not minus 7. The minus 7 is as a result of a deficit that the Saskatoon Health Board created over the last year or two. So the member opposite must understand that.

The minus 1.2 or whatever it is — I'm not sure of the exact figure but it's in that range — with respect to Saskatoon is this year's budget and would not be difficult to implement but for the fact that they had incurred a deficit over the last couple of years. What is happening in Saskatoon, if the member opposite . . . and I'm sure she's aware of this — they are going out and looking at options as to how they can deal with the deficit.

So when they go to the long-term care facilities, for example, and say, what can we do with respect to a minus 7 as a worst-case scenario, they get back a response and they can make these decisions.

Yesterday she was here saying it was minus 7 and everybody was going to . . . the sky was falling in. Mr. Malcolm has indicated that that's the worst-case scenario and they're looking at options. The Department of Health will be meeting with the Saskatoon Health Board, they will look at their plan, they will be discussing their plan, and there will be further notification to the Saskatoon public as to how the shortfall created by the Saskatoon Health Board will be dealt with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, in the budget speech the Finance Minister said, and I quote from page 19:

. . . I am very pleased to announce that for 1995-96, there will be:

. . . an increase of 1.6 per cent for district health boards.

Madam Minister, where does it say, except for

Saskatoon, where the funding will result in a shortfall that none of the people expected? It doesn't say that anywhere in the budget. Now will you please explain to the Saskatoon Health Board or the long-term care homes who were promised an increase in your budget, where they were supposed to find the proper information? How were they supposed to interpret the statement that was made in your budget?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The statement in the budget had to do with averages. Some district boards will be getting as much as 3 and 4 per cent increase. Some will have a decrease. It's an average of the 1.6 across the province, but it varies from district to district.

Now I know that the member opposite is not interested in moving to an equitable situation amongst all districts in this province. I know that she wants to create problems for health reform as opposed to working constructively not just with Saskatoon and district, but with the entire province. There are many places in this province that have not received adequate funding for health care. And so we must, within the context of the global budget for health, move toward a more equitable situation.

We are however going to be looking at Saskatoon's situation with Saskatoon and trying to work through the problems that are not created by this year's budget allocations but by the shortfall that was generated over the last two years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, you have been the Minister of Health over the last two years, and I guess that's in part what we're talking about here. Why are you meeting with these people now? Why wouldn't you meet with them before? You have given them a completely and totally unrealistic expectation of a deadline — deadlines that you don't seem to care about at all on your side of the House.

As a health care worker puts it, the impact on the Saskatoon Health District could be very dramatic, and there are several options that exist, not simply redistribution of funds. But this could mean site closures, and it could mean significant role changes and mergers and amalgamations, all of which can only be implemented on a long-term basis, Madam Minister, not by your April 1 deadline.

Now will you show some compassion, not just for seniors but the people on the Saskatoon Health Board and the facilities who are faced with what they consider to be incredible challenges? Will you give them more than the 13 days left to plan for the impact of this shock to their budgets? Just answer a simple yes or no.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the comments of the member opposite, I want to make this point. She's concerned about mergers and all this, and I wonder where she's been in the last 10 to 15 years when the consolidation of services in Saskatoon

has been a hot topic. The reason why the former government was unable to achieve it is because they got involved in a political fashion on every little decision that was being made at the Saskatoon level. And when you politicize these kind of decisions, as the Leader of the Liberal Party is attempting to do, you achieve no reform.

It is absolutely essential that we have mergers and consolidation in Saskatoon. It will lead to a higher quality of health care services. It will lead to higher quality of health care services for less money for the taxpayers, and the academic community and the medical community for the most part in Saskatoon know and understand that. That process has taken place; we're attempting to let Saskatoon make those decisions themselves. And the member opposite wants to politicize the process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Messer Lawsuit Settlement

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, once again we have seen the influence that Jack Messer has over this government. I understand, Mr. Minister, that you've come to an out-of-court settlement of \$20,000 to relocate Jack Messer's neighbour, so that Jack Messer won't have to put up with his flies.

Mr. Minister, your government has no money to keep rats from biting people in Estevan, but you do have \$20,000 to keep flies off of Jack Messer.

Mr. Minister, do you think that \$20,000 is a worthwhile expenditure of taxpayers' money, just to ensure that Jack Messer won't have to buy a bug zapper?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take the question because the Department of Justice has been acting on behalf of the government in the lawsuit in question.

I'm constrained in what I can say because the settlement has not yet been finalized and is still tentative. And because it is tentative, if it falls through . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't know if the opposition are interested in my answer, Mr. Speaker. But if the settlement doesn't fall through, the matter will go to trial, and consequently I'm constrained about what I can say in this House or anywhere else.

The government is very concerned, as was the previous government, about its legal position with respect to claims for nuisance or claims based upon pollutants, and the members will know that. In fact the members had . . . the now opposition, when it was government, had a policy that was available for relocating farm buildings in exactly these circumstances.

So the principle that underlines the controversy here is not a new one. The government has been very concerned about how to handle it; we're very concerned about how to handle it. It's nothing to do with Jack Messer; it has to do with the question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, let's not be cynical about this. Let's treat it for what it is. It is a problem of pollution and a problem of an alleged nuisance, and the position of the government is very, very precarious with respect to a claim like this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly this morning to make a statement of a personal nature.

Leave granted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Statement by a Member

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly. During the past week, I have become the focus of a controversy which I believe has been unjust. The issue seems to have become whether or not I have used my communication allowance inappropriately.

I believe that all of my actions have been within the rules and the directives of the Assembly. I believe that I have done nothing wrong or inappropriate. However, it appears that the opposition have decided to use my circumstances as an excuse to block wider reforms and clarification of the rules. I have decided today to remove those obstacles and allow the reform to take place.

Therefore I have asked my constituency association to send the Legislative Assembly a cheque for \$93, which I believe represents the amount paid by the Legislative Assembly. I ask the Legislative Assembly to hold the cheque in trust until the Board of Internal Economy has clarified the directives for the benefits of all members of this Assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to provide for Mediation

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Queen's Bench (Mediation) Amendment Act, 1994.

I would like to set the stage for the amendments that I'm introducing today by providing you with a quote published some time ago by *The Financial Post*. These words were addressed to potential users of our

Canadian justice system. And I quote:

In the best of all possible worlds, justice would be done efficiently, inexpensively and with minimal emotional pain to those involved. But until legal reforms take place . . . you're entering a less than perfect world that will require caution, stamina and bravery to survive.

I believe that this quote, Mr. Speaker, is significant and quite appropriate. The fact that it was put forward as a warning to consumers is also significant. The fact that it also comes from one of Canada's most respected newspapers is also of special significance. It speaks to a great challenge facing the justice system. The challenge is fundamental — the justice system's failure to serve the needs of our citizens.

Now I realize, Mr. Speaker, that that is a sweeping and a negative statement, but I want to qualify it in two ways. First, our current system of justice is not failing in a wholesale manner. In Saskatchewan it operates with relative efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly, its shortcomings have not been ignored. Justice reform is a constant process — a gradual process but a constant one.

We have taken some significant steps in that direction in Saskatchewan in recent years. However if you consider the justice system from the point of the individual citizen, a consumer of justice services, I think the system's weaknesses are readily apparent. The challenge for us is in identifying not the weaknesses, but the solutions. The challenge is to ensure that the justice system is both accessible and responsive.

The amendments contained in this Bill address two major failings of our system of dispute resolution. The first failing is the high cost and the delay associated with traditional adversarial litigation. This forces many people to forgo their rights because they can't afford to pursue them in court. There are law firms in this province, Mr. Speaker, who are advising their clients that if their claim is for less than \$50,000, forget it; it's not economical to pursue the matter by way of litigation into the courts.

The second failing is that the formal adversarial basis of litigation is simply not suited to resolving certain types of disputes. The most graphic example of this unsuitability of the process, of the adversarial process, is a dispute arising from a family breakdown. Assume we were to set out today to design a new system for resolving family breakdown issues — issues such as child custody, access to children, maintenance payments, and the division of property — we would not likely begin with an adversarial process that pits family members against each other with the objective of determining who is the winner and who is the loser.

When people are experiencing the upheaval of the most intimate relationships of their lives, they have a tremendous personal stake in the outcome. Positions are most often based upon the emotion of the

moment, and the traditional court process does not always take these factors into account.

(1045)

This holds true, Mr. Speaker, for other types of litigation as well. Wrongful dismissal, wrongful dismissal actions, personal injury actions, issues surrounding estates — these are examples of where the . . . of other types of litigation that have a heavy emotional overtone and for which the adversarial system is not ideally suited. Positions can become unreasonable in these circumstances; and the people involved become polarized, unnecessarily polarized, through the adversarial litigation process which we have had in this system of ours for such a very long time.

Our system of dispute resolution continues to be primarily geared toward litigation. We provide an elaborate litigation structure, but we do little to facilitate or encourage settlement. This is not to say that settlement is, where it's possible, is not the norm. In fact the great majority of court cases are settled prior to trial.

The Bill before us today recognizes the fact that the system already tries to achieve settlement in many cases. It builds on the experience we have gained from collaborative problem-solving processes in our current system that work, Mr. Speaker, that work. It is results oriented. It will facilitate open communication. It leaves consumers in control of, and participating directly in, the decisions that are made.

This legislation will formally incorporate the use of mediation, front-end mediation, in legal actions. It does this in the following ways, Mr. Speaker. First, as soon as a civil action is commenced in the Court of Queen's Bench, the parties must take part in an initial mediation session.

In family law matters, parties will attend an initial mediation orientation session and a mediator will screen the matter to determine whether the dispute is suitable for mediation. These initial sessions will allow parties to judge whether or not further mediation would be useful in their case. Second, if either party refuses to attend this initial session, that could be the basis for the court to disallow their claim or strike out their defence.

We intend the initial mediation session to be provided through the mediation services branch of the Department of Justice. And after that it would be open to the parties to use mediation services or to obtain mediation from another source or to choose not to pursue mediation. That would be up to them.

There will of course be cases where mediation may not be appropriate or may not be effective. Family breakdowns, for example, that involve domestic violence often fall into the category where mediation is not effective or not appropriate. These amendments provide the flexibility to allow certain types of actions

to be exempted from the mediation process.

But, Mr. Speaker, in an appropriate situation, mediation does provide a less costly and more effective method of solving problems. Mediation must be viewed as an integral part of the court process. To maximize its benefits, mediation must be a standard option in the early stages of litigation, an option to be explored before positions have become crystallized, before the parties have become inflexible.

Mr. Speaker, I view this Bill as an important step in the process of developing a more accessible and user friendly justice system. I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to provide for Mediation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this is a fairly new concept that you're bringing forward, but I think it does have a significant amount of merit to it — the idea of speeding up the process within the legal system.

We've seen cases in this province that go for a significant amount of time. And when that happens, people have forgotten what the events were, or as you say, people become fixed in their positions and it makes it very difficult for people to change and it makes it very difficult for the general public to understand what is happening. If the process can be speeded up, I think that's a value to everyone in society. If the process can be made more accessible to everyone, that is also of significant value to us.

Mr. Minister, this legislation was introduced yesterday I believe. People of this province have not yet had time to digest this, to review it, and to understand all of the implications that may be involved. And while I believe it does have a significant amount of value, we need more time to have a look at this, Mr. Minister. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 39 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to create a Family Law Division and to enact Consequential Amendments arising from the enactment of this Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Queen's Bench (Family Law Division) Amendment Act 1994. The Unified Family Court has operated in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, since 1978 as a pilot project. By any measure it has been a strong success. This Bill will expand the Unified Family Court concept to the remainder of the province. It will do this through the creation of a family law division within the Court of Queen's Bench.

Since its inception, support for the Unified Family Court in Saskatoon has been consistent and it's been strong and it remains so today. Underlying this level of

support, Mr. Speaker, is the understanding that family law is unique and distinguishable from other types of civil actions. There are at least four elements that make this area of the law unique and distinguishable.

The first, family law disputes commonly involve a greater human emotional element than any other dispute — a few moments ago I referred to that.

Secondly, the dispute most often dramatically affects other people, people who are not direct parties to the action, most especially the children of the failed marriage as well as extended family members and indeed, other members of the community.

Thirdly, the disputes are commonly a combination of issues, a combination of monetary issues, property issues, and personal relationship issues.

Fourthly, the monetary and personal relationship issues are continuous and dynamic. They go on and on. They're not the sort of one-time, one-event situations that are the subject of a lot of civil actions, but they deal with elements of a relationship which is going to continue on and on into the future.

For those four reasons, Mr. Speaker, this group of cases that we refer to generally as family law cases are unique and they are quite distinguishable from other types of civil actions which come before our courts.

Now evaluations have been made of the Unified Family Court experience in Saskatoon as well as in many other provinces as this concept has been picked up elsewhere. And it has been found to be an effective and a sensitive approach for dealing with the kinds of issues that surround family law type cases and family breakdowns.

Now to effectively address the unique nature of these kinds of cases, I believe our court system must have a number of key elements embedded in it. The first is that the jurisdiction with respect to the issues that surround family law cases should be collected into one court. Citizens shouldn't have to go to different courts in order to solve different problems involving the same fact situation, the same marriage.

Secondly, the system should have simple rules and procedures, and they should be simplified to the greatest extent possible. The rules and procedures surrounding civil cases are not simple; they are complex and that is probably a product of the history of the legal system that we have for dispute resolution with respect to disputes between our citizens.

Thirdly, and of key significance, is that the system must provide judges who have specialized expertise. The law surrounding family law issues is so complex, so difficult, the cases are so time consuming that most people have come to recognize that it requires judges with a great deal of expertise.

Now that is not to reflect upon the judges that we have, except to say that they have to hear a whole band of cases which may involve any kind of civil

dispute at all, and at the same time those same judges have responsibility to run major criminal trials, especially jury trials. And so their focus over their years of judging has been wide and expanded. And they haven't had the opportunity to focus in on this range of cases that we refer to as family law cases. A system that is responsive to the problems that I have outlined to the House ought to be headed by judges, run by judges, who have the opportunity to specialize in these cases and become expert in dealing with the issues.

The fourth key element that I think our court system must have is that it must provide a wide range of support services to families who are involved in disputes — a wide range of legal and social support services. The court itself, the Court of Queen's Bench, does not have those services, hasn't had them, and it is important that the judges who have to hear and deal with these kind of cases are able to draw on those support services. It is even more important that the families involved, the people involved in these unfortunate cases, have these kind of supports available to them.

So our goal, Mr. Speaker, is to provide a single legal institution which is specifically designed to deal with the family as an organic whole. This Bill creates a family law division of our existing Court of Queen's Bench. It provides that there will be six judges assigned to this family law division. The family law division will be given exclusive family law jurisdiction throughout the entire province.

In relation to child protection matters, it will have concurrent jurisdiction with the Provincial Court outside of Regina and Saskatoon. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that in a centre far removed from Regina and Saskatoon it may be necessary to obtain a quick court order when you're dealing with child protection matters, and that will most conveniently involve a Provincial Court judge. That is a jurisdiction that they've been exercising for decades in this province and we propose that they will continue to have concurrent jurisdiction in relation to child protection matters.

I mentioned a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, the availability of related services and support services as one of the factors that are key to the success of a Unified Family Court. These services include the following, and I'll mention five kinds of services that will be attached to this court.

First of all, mediation. Mr. Speaker, we have just debated and begun second reading consideration of the legislation dealing with legislation, and I mentioned a few moments ago in this Assembly that that legislation will require the parties to attend an initial orientation session allowing them to decide whether or not further mediation would be useful.

(1100)

I mentioned that a mediator would screen the matter at that initial session to determine whether the dispute

was suitable for a mediation process. I won't dwell on that because I've already informed the House about the key considerations behind that concept.

The second kind of support services which is very important are custody and access investigation services. The court has to make very difficult decisions about who has the custody of the children and what kind of access the other party will have to those children. It's difficult decisions for the court to make because the evidence that is presented to the court is as limited as it is and it puts the judges in a very difficult position to make those decisions when they don't know the entire situation. So we propose to provide expert support services for the court so that the court will have in front of it objective reports on the issues of custody of children and access to children.

Third is a supervised access service. The idea here is that in certain cases the court will feel that it is appropriate to have an access but only on the basis that there is someone there to supervise the access. It may be that the court feels that the children are at physical risk or at emotional risk and that in those circumstances somebody else should be there to ensure that the child is safe and protected. We will provide services, make available people to the court so that that kind of supervised access can take place.

The fourth service is to provide counselling in the case of family breakdown. We'll probably have to do this on a group basis, but that has been a very effective way of approaching this problem in the past and we propose that we would provide that kind of counselling support to people who are having marital problems within the structure of this family law division.

The fifth thing that we propose is that information kits and general information about the consequences of marriage breakdown be provided to people who want to know what will be their legal situation if the marriage does in fact breakdown. These are self-help type of kits. And the Unified Family Court has in the past had this information available in Saskatoon and it has really got a steady run of customers and I think provides an important community service. And we propose to provide that through the family law division.

Now all of these services might not be immediately available all across the province because it will take some time to implement this program, but we hope to see them available as soon as possible throughout all of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is an ambitious goal that the Bill sets for the government. Expanding the Unified Family Court in the way that the Bill describes is a very ambitious and very difficult thing. But I believe it is fundamental to reducing the difficulties that families have in dealing with marriage breakdown.

It is, Mr. Speaker, a way also of demonstrating that the justice system values children and that has been such

a strong emphasis of many of the things that we have been doing as a government. We want to ensure that the justice system is responsive to the needs of children and gives priority to their needs and helps to ensure their security and their safety. We firmly believe that that can be done most effectively within the structure of a dedicated court — a court dedicated to the dealing with family breakdown issues.

Mr. Speaker, this is, as we have commented on earlier, the International Year of the Family, and in a number of ways in this province and other parts of the country, governments and others are renewing their commitment to support and protect families. The Bill before us today is one way in which we can clearly demonstrate that we are meeting that commitment.

There is another part of the Bill that I should mention, Mr. Speaker, that deals with another matter. And I wouldn't want the House to miss that. It is not related to the family law division, but it reaffirms our commitment to improving access to the courts. That is something that the previous Bill was also about.

Currently if a person dies in Saskatchewan but was not resident here, leaves no property here, the court does not have jurisdiction to grant letters of administration or letters probate in the estate. And the effect of the current law is that survivors must wait about six months before they can get in a position to sue the person who is responsible for the death. And this amendment eliminates that delay. It is a simple matter of law reform to remove a barrier that our citizens who are in this unfortunate situation have or encounter when they're seeking to enforce their rights.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to create a Family Law Division and to enact Consequential Amendments arising from the enactment of this Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we believe that families and children are the most important component in our society. Therefore any law that would help protect and defend families and children is a worthwhile effort. In fact the previous administration put in what was called the Family Foundation as a department or as a cabinet minister responsible for families because they felt families were indeed just that important.

I would have to wonder though whether or not a new division within the legal system, what effect that is going to have on the process. Will that speed it up or will that slow it down? If you have to go through the family law that is being brought in — division — through this Act, do you then go some place else after that, and what is the process? Would that be the ultimate end until you can go to a Court of Appeal, or what would the process be through there. That would be a concern as to whether or not it was going to speed up the system, Mr. Minister.

Accessibility is always important, and particularly in

cases dealing with family issues, because they are indeed so emotional and so tied together that everyone has a great deal of difficulty dealing with the situations. And mediation and consultation, counselling, all of those items are extremely important.

But with counselling, I would have a concern if this Bill is going to say that counselling is a legal requirement. I think you have a great deal of negativity if you're forcing someone to take counselling when they don't want to. And I think that would be a problem if the Act is saying that.

We talked about judges having expertise in a particular field, and that's good. But if that expertise narrows them down to the point where they're existing in a vacuum, I think that's a problem. They have to be aware of all of the other implications that are going on in society, not just the family law.

Because when you're talking family law, what's the definition of family? How broad, how narrow is that? Because every legal aspect of our society impacts at some point in time on families. So just how broad and how narrow is all this going to be? That's one of the issues I think that would have to be addressed, Mr. Minister.

I was interested in your comments on probate of estates because I had a constituent approach me just recently dealing with that particular issue. And so perhaps rather than just a time frame being opened up on that, there are some other issues involved.

When people outside of Saskatchewan pass away leaving real property in Saskatchewan, it creates a problem until that will is probated in Saskatchewan. If it's not probated in Saskatchewan, there are some difficult legal circumstances that become involved. In this particular constituent that contacted me, it was dealing with mineral rights and how to transfer mineral rights out of the estates to some other person. And they were having a great deal of difficulty doing that because the wills had not been probated in Saskatchewan.

This is a fairly complex issue, Mr. Speaker. It needs serious consideration. It needs time to have consultation with those people across the province, those organizations, those people concerned with families and children that will be affected by this legislation. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn this Bill at this time.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Labour Vote 20

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr.

Chairman. First a word about the morning's business to the members opposite in both parties. We had a brief discussion about what we might do for the balance of the morning. It is now our intention to adjourn these estimates at 12 and go to Highways. So you should govern yourselves accordingly. I say that as well to the member of the third party who is present.

With that, I am pleased to be able to give to the opposition — if I can have the assistance of a page, thank you — copies of the answers to the questions which you'd asked. We have set out in a comprehensive way the legislative costs of last year's legal projects — the occupational health and safety, worker's compensation, etc. — set out this year's costs, set out in a complete way the costs of the labour tours.

I want members opposite to compare this with the cost of the GRIP tours. I want members here to note the sparsity of the tour. Unlike members opposite who loaded up trunks with alcohol at government expense, none of that occurred here. This was a shoestring tour.

Now we also have . . . it was not asked, but we have as well a summary of the expenditures on the round table discussions on The Labour Standards Act. And finally, given the pathetic nature of the presentation of last night from the members opposite, we decided perhaps we should reconsider and do the sums for you. So we took pity on you and did the math for you as well.

And I think that is . . . oh, and one more thing. I have as well the breakdown of the costs for The Trade Union Act review, the Priel committee and the Ish committee. We broke down as well, since you asked for it, the expenditures on occupational health and safety and on workers' compensation last year. I don't think I gave you that actually.

Now one other thing that I'm going to give to the member before I take my seat. I had intimated that there may be some other costs, which were legal costs in the preparation of the Bills. That in fact proved to be the case and I've given you a breakdown of that as well. I think you've now got all the costs associated with this.

(1115)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, I look forward to receiving the information that you're sending across and we will attempt to look through it as quickly as we can and respond to its accuracy, which I seriously doubt will be there.

As for my pathetic performance, I couldn't possibly stand in my place and not say something about that. You've taken quite a bit of time trying to irritate me and promote my temper and to see if you couldn't get me to respond in some kind of a ferocious manner with your statements, both yesterday and again today.

So I guess the thing that I find pathetic is to try to enter

into a debate which is supposedly conducted between people who have the faith of the people of Saskatchewan who elected them. A contest of wits is what we had, and to me the pathetic thing was to be in that contest with an unarmed opponent. So with all of the officials that you have, I'm hoping that today you will have armed yourself a little better.

I did bring my calculator along, Minister, and while I haven't seen the figures yet, I've been punching some figures out for you. And it's amazing how after we added up a few things, that we came up with an awful lot of expenditures that you never talked about in the question periods of both yesterday and the day before.

We came up with figures of costs that were phenomenally high, as compared to what you even talked about yesterday when it takes an hour of my time to flush out of you the realistic fact that there aren't 1,500 brochures that have been printed and distributed, but in reality 3,000. No, wrong, 300,000 you said — 300,000 brochures, not 1,500.

Now how do you suppose I'm supposed to conduct an intelligent conversation with a person that can't figure out the difference between 1,500 brochures printed or 300,000? It's an absolute disgrace, sir, the way you've conducted yourself in this office. I'd be ashamed of myself and resign today if I were you. It's disgusting the way you've carried on. It's also disgusting the way that you have portrayed this whole issue on a one-sided scale.

Now I took the time to read through the papers that you delivered to me yesterday which you say are the amendments that you will be supplying to people who have inquiries of your office. And yes, you do quote the Price Waterhouse impact study and you do quote the costs for each item down the sheet and you do come up with a total.

I want to read this into the record because it's very significant the way you've drawn up this particular piece of political propaganda, which is what it is in bare truth. It says here, and I quote:

Price Waterhouse concludes, based on the review of our estimated range of incremental costs, our best estimate of the total incremental cost to employers is \$9,500,000. That represents less than one-tenth of 1 per cent of the total of Saskatchewan payroll costs.

Now, Minister, you haven't misquoted Price Waterhouse. What you've done once again though is only told half of what's in the report. And with this one sentence taken out of context you deliberately lead to a subliminal message that it's all okay. Don't worry about it. It isn't going to cost anybody very much. No problem.

What you forgot, sir, was to mention the reality of the fact that this report starts out by having a disclaimer, a disclaimer saying that nobody can hold us responsible for this report. That's what a disclaimer is. In other words, the report is disclaimed before you even start

to read it.

The second thing you don't point out is that in this report it states that there are some negative side-effects. And those negative side-effects are that students and disabled people, elderly people will not, will not prosper by this legislation but in fact will be hurt by this legislation and they will have a harder time getting jobs.

I read to you a little excerpt that I took from a conversation with a business person on The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32: it may hurt the people it's intended to help. If there is a negative cost impact, employers will not hire or they may stick to full-time workers rather than to hire extra students in the summer.

This is a reality that comes home in a lot of our Saskatchewan-based industries because of our weather and climate, where we do a lot of our work in the summertime because that's the only time it's warm enough to work outside.

I think specifically of machinery manufacturers or machinery salespeople who put up cultivators and hire students to do the work in the summertime. Do you think those employers are going to bother if the numbers they hire put them over the 20 numbers-of-employees and as a result they have to put together a whole bunch of extra bookwork and hire another accountant? Not likely.

It goes on: they may close a lot of their businesses and simply move out, or they may choose not to do some extra work and they may choose to contract it out to firms in Manitoba or Alberta. For example, again our manufacturers of equipment — and that would mostly be farm equipment in Saskatchewan, I suspect — but suppose they had to hire somebody to assemble shanks with spring assemblies. They might choose to phone over to Manitoba and say, send them over as an assembly now rather than as pieces that need to be assembled. And there goes the summer jobs for all of our students.

Now the other point that this individual made is that when work must be given to those with seniority, the employer has no flexibility on ability when they hire the person to do the job. So it's hard to match work to skill.

Now, Minister, those are the real problems that people have seen, and it only touches the tip of the iceberg. But no place in any of your propaganda have you mentioned or considered any of those side-effects. You've done this totally without balance because it is a political propaganda machine, and nothing else but that. This is pay-back time for the big union boys and you're starting slow but you're working up, and we see it coming in spades.

You try to camouflage it with personal attacks on individuals to try to get the public to not notice what you're

doing. You make slurs against people like myself in the hope that folks won't notice what you're doing to the rest of the people in your legislation. And that, sir, is not going to wash. Because, quite frankly, I don't care what you say about me; what I care about is the job base in this province that you are destroying.

Because it has been my personal quest in life to get involved in politics for one main reason and one main reason only. And that is to develop this province into a place where our children can stay at home to make a decent and respectable living. And you are destroying that, so that makes me and you more than political adversaries.

You are destroying the very thing, the very roots and fundamental objectives, to which I have gotten into this contest for. You're destroying the ability of our young people to get a decent education in this province and then to apply it to a job, or some kind of standard of living or way of life within the province.

And I say that with conviction, sir, because I have four children who are now old enough to be on their own in the world, and all four of them are out of Saskatchewan. There's no room for them in this province at competitive lifestyle. Not one of them could follow their chosen careers in this province and get anything close to the same kind of lifestyle and consideration of lifestyle. Even in Alberta where one of them is located, where she has to pay for her own medical premium through her work, she makes more money and has a better lifestyle than she can have in Saskatchewan under our system.

Our system is fundamentally flawed because we are out of synchronization with our neighbours. Everything in this province that you do in this labour portfolio that you are the head of, has a very distinct effect on the direction that our province is going to go, and is going, and will continue to go. And you're going backwards, not because you're doing all wrong things, but because you're doing some good things with a lot of bad things built in that are outweighing the benefits. And you're out of sync with our neighbours.

You've got to sit down, if you want this province to go ahead, with the people in Alberta and Manitoba and Montana and North Dakota and you've got to hammer out a plan of coexistence. Because we don't live in an island, and was suggested earlier today in some of the commentary. I was kind of shocked at that — commentary by the minister of SGI suggesting that we're going to do our own thing in Saskatchewan no matter what they do in Alberta on the used car issue.

Absolutely unacceptable approach to life, to consider that we are now a sovereign nation in Saskatchewan where we don't care about what our neighbours in not only the rest of this country do, but the neighbours of the other country beside us.

And I suggest to you we cannot live in that kind of isolation and we cannot prosper in that kind of isolation. And we will do nothing but lose our population and go downhill as an economic force. And if you don't believe me, check the financial

figures of this province that you are directly contributing to with your labour legislation, because you are helping to destroy the tax base.

The reality, sir, is this — that when the numbers go down, the taxes get less. As you get less people in this province, fewer and fewer people are paying for all of the services. And the whole thing is like a dominoes that has to collapse.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — What is the member's point of order?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I wonder if the member has given any thought to returning to Labour estimates. I would ask the chairman to rule whether or not the tax base in the province, a lengthy dissertation on the tax base in the province and a comparison with that of Manitoba and Alberta is indeed a proper part of Labour estimates.

The Chair: — I'm sure if the member relates it to the estimates; I'm sure he'll do that shortly.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reality is that the member is in charge of a huge amount of money that is going to be spent out of the taxes that people pay in this province — \$5 billion worth of taxes taken in in this province and being spent in large part by this department — that is being used by the unions of this province to destroy the very tax base that brings in those dollars.

And that is my point. You're wasting the taxpayers' dollars buying something that is actually destroying the tax base. And that is not the way the taxpayers intended to have their money spent.

So I know that the minister will be anxious to return the comments on my observations, and while he's doing that I want to study through the papers that he sent over. And then we will get into some more specific questions about how you are wasting the taxpayers' dollars in the actual estimates.

(1130)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well in that lengthy dissertation I only found one thing that remotely related to Labour estimates. It was the comment that we're spending a huge amount of money. Let me respond to the member opposite by pointing out that this province's budget for Labour is less than any province west of the Maritimes, and virtually the smallest in Canada. Just as the Labour tours are a shoestring operation, but a very effective one, so this department is a shoestring operation but a very effective one.

I hope the member would compare the expenditures on a per capita basis in the Department of Labour in Saskatchewan, with that of any other province except Prince Edward Island. I think you'll find taxpayers are very well served by the expenditures in this province.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, that's where we disagree. You see, I think if you were spending \$5 on your Labour Standards Act to advertise it, that would be a waste. When you get that up to millions, it's an absolute atrocity.

But let's get into this thing. Were the amendments currently proposed to The Labour Standards Act, Mr. Minister, factored into the 1994-95 budget?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes.

Mr. Goohsen: — In that case, Minister, will any new inspectors, board members, or any other sort of new staff need to be hired to implement the new legislation? Now could you estimate the cost of these.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, we anticipate two more labour standards officers to administer this area.

Mr. Goohsen: — Where would I find that in the estimates?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is not necessarily an appropriate time to give the member instruction on how the estimate book is structured. Let me point out if you open up the estimates of Labour, begin with the first section, you'll find that the total number of persons have increased to a little over two. So that's where you find it, right on page 1. It's not hard to find.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay, Minister, what further education and training will be required in your department to implement the new legislation and at what cost?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There will be some training of this obviously. The changes are not enormously complex but there will be some. It will be mostly done internally, and the increased costs in training will also be minimal as a result. But there will be some internal training.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, I've got about 30 pages of questions on these issues and I know that because of the deadlines that you have set out earlier in this process today, that I'll never be able to get through so . . . And that doesn't even get me into the estimate book so it's going to take a while for us to get all this tracked down.

I wanted to go back just a minute to a comment you made when you started in your political ramblings at the start of today's proceedings. You alluded to the fact that people spent a lot of money on the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program to sell it. And I think you were trying to say to the people that you're justified to spend the money of the Labour department to advertise your new legislation, which of course the GRIP program also was legislated, and you're saying that there's a comparison there.

I take particular offence at the comments you made that trucks were loaded up with alcohol at government expense and trucked around this province. I suggest that that would be against the law. I

suggest that if you would care to repeat those kinds of accusations outside of this House, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) would be more than happy to check that out for you.

And I suggest to you that if you are going to make accusations like that, prove them and put them on the table outside of this Assembly and let the proper authorities investigate them, and let's have this sort of thing properly taken care of. Otherwise, don't make these kind of accusations.

Because, quite simply, it's a very serious thing to accuse people of misappropriating government money. And if I'm offended, how do you suppose the people that were involved would feel about that kind of comment? So, Minister, I suggest you guard your thoughts and the way that you put together your arguments.

As for the GRIP program, it had nothing to do with this kind of waste of money. That program was explaining a program and how it works, and the negative sides were explained as well as the positive. That's the difference between your program and the GRIP program and the way it was taken to the people, because the people could stand up and ask every question they want.

I've got here a piece of paper that tells exactly how your meetings were conducted. You said yesterday it would have been nice if I would have attended the meeting to find out what was going on. So we took the time to check with some of the people. They told me that you would stand up in the assembly of these meetings and give a 30- to 50-minute dissertation about the track record of trade unions in Britain and the United States of America, after which you would take one or two questions, and then you'd run out of time and run off to another meeting. And you never gave people a chance even to talk or to ask questions about this program.

That's what they think of you and the way you conducted your road show. They never even got a chance to ask questions. And you try to compare that to a program like GRIP where hundreds of millions of dollars were given to people to survive in this province? Shame on you. I say no more about that subject, sir, because my colleague has a lot more that he needs to say.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could explain to me your definition of the word, consultation. What does it mean to you?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Consultation is a two-way flow of information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you consult, what kind of a time frame do you allow for people to access the information, digest the information, and consult with you?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Anywhere from an hour to an

hour and a . . . the member is right, my comments would last about half an hour. Question period would last anywhere from an additional hour to an additional two and a half hours, depending on the context.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, would the people involved have any access to the information that you were bringing them prior to these consultative meetings, that hour to an hour and a half? Or would you simply come in and, here is the information; you have an hour to tell me what you think about it?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In most cases we didn't have an advance list of who was coming. On occasions where we did, we did send them information. But on most occasions we did not have names and addresses of people who would be there beforehand. We did pass out the information and we did receive learned questions. I might say, if some of those question-and-answer periods were repeated in these estimates, it would be a considerable improvement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, you have an opportunity to bring forward the questions that were asked there, and why don't you do so — and the answers, if you wish.

Mr. Minister, part of consultation, you say, is a two-way flow of information. Well I can give you information — and we do this in the House all the time; I say something and you say something — but the real question is, is anybody listening? So when you have information flow, do both parties listen to what the other is saying?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Oh, indeed. The legislative proposals with which we started before the Labour tours were very different than what we finished up with. The legislation changed as time went on and as ideas were received.

I can give the hon. member any number of examples of that, if you want it. It was indeed a process by which they listened and understood; we listened and understood. And that might be a model of how this place should function, instead of these baseless allegations about wild expenditures of money.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, there's a number of organizations across this province who feel that consultation process dealing with the new Bills before the House — and I know we can't discuss the Bills and I'm not interested in that today, but the process leading up to that — who feel that the consultation process was very, very poor in their particular cases.

I talked with the Minister of Education in her estimates about this. And the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) only found out about the consultations being done dealing with the labour legislation by accident, because they happened to be involved in another meeting where it was mentioned that there was some consultation taking place about

labour legislation. And they found out only shortly before the final drafts were made.

Now I don't know . . . this is a group, the SSTA, that is probably the largest employer in the province outside of the provincial government and the Crown corporations. They have approximately 18,000 employees — an area with 18,000 employees, with a number of part-time employees and they're not even notified that there is this consultation taking place. They don't receive the information that is being discussed. I think you're consultation was being done with picked groups, groups that you thought would support whatever type of legislation you were bringing forward.

So who did you consult with, Mr. Minister, in drafting this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I can give you a written list of the groups if you want. There were several hundred, I mean, of which the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) is one.

To be fair to the member from Souris-Cannington, you accurately, I think, reflect the views expressed by the SSTA. I'm going to be meeting with them later on in the day to pursue those comments — and I am going to pursue them, because I don't entirely understand the nature of their concern.

Let me say that the meeting wasn't . . . Let me say, first of all, the fact that we're consulting on labour Bills couldn't have come as a surprise to anyone. Everybody in the province knew these Bills were coming and everybody knew we were talking about them. My telephone number is not hard to find. All you do is pick up a phone and phone.

We did not receive any requests for a meeting from SSTA. We called them. We set up the meeting. The meeting lasted an hour with myself and then I had to come back to the House; it continued for another three hours with the officials. That was a longer meeting than anyone else had.

It was said by them to be insufficient so we're meeting again today. So I will admit that the member reflects the views of the SSTA. I've got to honestly say, I don't entirely understand them and really welcome the opportunity later on today to resume this matter.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, when you were planning your consultations, what did you do to allow people to know that labour legislation was going to come forward at this time, how did you inform the various parties? What did you do to encourage them to come forward and take part in meaningful consultations with you?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We would contact the local chamber and arrange a date, provide them with information which we had by way of background — the proposals and so on. Since we rarely had a list of who was coming and who wasn't, it was left to the local group to circulate the information. It was

certainly made available to them in most cases.

Some of the meetings were arranged with less notice, and sometimes that didn't happen. But in most cases, the organization and the local chamber or the local trade union, as the case may be, arranged a meeting. They got the hall. And as a matter of interest, in most cases they paid for it, which we appreciated. They sent out the invitations and we went and met the group which they had brought. So the usual arrangement was we contacted a chamber or a trade union, as the case would be; they issued the invitation and made most of the arrangements. So that was the usual.

I may say that this is the first time that we . . . we heard a good deal of comments about the government, the department, the legislation, last year, and not all of it complimentary. Some of it was critical, as will be the case in any democratic group.

This, however, is the first time I've had it said that this consultation was not meaningful. Almost everybody who came to the meetings found the meetings useful, whether they agreed or not. They came away with a better understanding of the complexity of the problem and we came away with a better understanding of their particular needs. I think both benefited from the discussion.

But you are the first group to suggest that this consultation was nothing but a public relations exercise. The people who actually attended the meetings didn't feel that way.

(1145)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, I think you used kind of a slipshod method of disseminating this information in your consultative efforts. You would contact a local chamber of commerce and say, can you put on a meeting for me next week and I'll come and talk to you for an hour about the changes to the labour legislation. And as my colleague mentioned, they said you would speak for three-quarters of an hour or so and allow perhaps a few questions at the end. I think that's not a lot of consultation.

Did the government invite anyone to meet with them to consult on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, at last count it was about 200 groups we invited to meet with us.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, would you provide us with that list, the dates, and who they were?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, we can provide that in reasonably short order. I don't think we physically have it here. But we'll provide it to you within a matter of 48 . . . two working days.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would you provide the time frame prior . . . or the notification they received of such meetings? You know, was it a one-day notice, was it a week? What

was it?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I can give you averages. I don't know that we've always logged that with every group; in fact I don't think we did. So I don't think I can give you that. I don't think that information was logged. All we can do is give you some general comments about how much notice they generally had. It would have been, under normal circumstances, a couple of weeks, sometimes a little longer. But we'll try and provide as precise information as still exists.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you give us a broad example of the types of groups or organizations you met with?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Okay. Well let me take you through a typical day then. I think I'm going to pick, out of the blue, Meadow Lake.

We started in Meadow Lake with a . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It wasn't a very warm day. A breakfast which . . . Now this shows what a shoestring operation this was. If we couldn't get the local chamber or some other group to pay our expenses, we tried to unload the problem on the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly). And in this case the member from Meadow Lake was more than generous.

We met with the health workers. Meadow Lake has a relatively, because it serves a large geographical area, they had a relatively large number of mental health workers. We met with those people, had a very good discussion actually, and we learned a good deal about the needs of that particular clientele in the workforce.

We then met with the hospital workers, and again a very good meeting in which we discussed not only labour law but the wellness as well. We met with the highways people, that's right, and again had a useful discussion with them.

Met with, one of whom — I don't think I'm talking out of school — one of whom, as I recall it, worked in a bank, which was the first time I had realized . . . I think it was the Royal Bank . . . the first time I had realized that many of the things which we're doing in The Labour Standards Act, the Royal Bank has already been doing, which kind of interested me. This is not where I usually look to for progressive labour legislation.

The comment of the people at the Royal Bank was very interesting. They said, and this is part-time workers, that part-time workers are increasing in the banks. And the comment was sort of to this effect: you people — meaning you politicians — think anyone can run a bank.

Well it is a difficult operation. The success of a bank depends entirely on the quality of the people. We found with part-time workers, when we did not provide them with a reasonable degree of protection and so on, we found we lost our best people and kept our worst. You can't run a bank doing that.

So we set up a system whereby they get part-time benefits. The part-time workers get benefits on a prorated basis. We set up a system whereby they're given adequate notice of scheduling and the workers are involved as well in the scheduling, and we've done all three of those things. And they said, thereafter we found we were keeping the best people which is what you need to run a bank.

So that was a meeting where it was very useful. We found out at that . . . I developed, if not a new understanding of the labour laws, I got from that meeting a very interesting perspective on it.

We met as well with the rural development office; met with those people and got an understanding of how these things might impact in some of the much smaller communities.

We met with the chamber of commerce during the afternoon and we met as well, with social service workers. And all in all, I think there was — if I'm correctly counting — about eight meetings during the day, all of which were informative for us and I got the feeling the people who had been there also found them informative. Whether or not they agreed with this, they did have a better understanding of the complexity of a problem.

So that's a typical day. Your colleague from Maple Creek described it as a vacation. It's a very strange vacation. The day started at 7:30 in the morning; we went top speed until about 10 o'clock at night. About three of those days and it'll drain the energy of the most dynamic person. And all of the people who are with us were among the most dynamic. But that is a typical day.

And the member from Maple Creek wants . . . the member from Meadow Lake wants it known that he enjoyed the whole exercise as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad somebody enjoyed the process.

Mr. Minister, when I look over your list, I'm wondering how much time you spent with the groups. You have the health care workers, the hospital workers, the Highways department, rural development, chamber of commerce, social service workers. What kind of time frame were each allocated? And you mentioned the one person from the bank. I'm not sure just where they fit into the process.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — A half an hour for my comments, an hour for the question and answer.

The member from Maple Creek I know is dying for all this information so let me give you a little. I talked about the booze which had been supplied to former ministers. I'm just going to give you one example. And I don't know how much you want to get into this, but I'm going to give you one example.

Saskatchewan Liquor Board reported that it paid expenses totalling \$16,000 for ministers to attend Big Valley Jamborees. I want you to compare that with the sort of tours that we were on. I just want you to make a fair comparison. The former government lived and travelled like Persian kings. They really did. It could not have been more opulent.

We ran this on a shoestring budget. Not only did the member from Meadow Lake pick up our expenses at one point in time but, if I'm not mistaken, the member from Swift Current did as well when we were there. These expenditures, you will find when you check that sheet, are absolute bare bones.

I want you to make a comparison with the sort of expenditures which your government . . . which the government made when you were in office. And I know what you're going to say. You're going to stand up and say, ah, but that wasn't me. And you're going to move to the Reform Party or you're going to move to the Liberal Party and leave it all behind. And that's the way old line parties work, I guess. As soon as the stench gets to be too bad, you just pick up your stuff and go to a new party. And that's the way you do it.

Well I just want to say here and now that this is not what the New Democratic Party does. We have been a political party for over six decades. We have a history that we are very proud of. Not once in those six decades has any member of this political party every wanted to move away from any stench. We have built and we are proud of the way we have built — unlike members opposite who create the most unbelievable stench and then they go Reform, or then they go Liberal. I just want it known that that may be your style and you may think that's smart politics, but it's not our style.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I can't answer for the member from Maple Creek or for the Liberals in the House, but when we talk about a stench in this field, I think we saw one covered up last night downstairs in the Board of Internal Economy. But if the member from Maple Creek wishes to rise and speak for himself, he can do so, or if . . . I'm even prepared to let the Liberals stand up and do that if they wish, and I'll do that right now for them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I gather they don't wish to respond.

Mr. Minister, your meetings in Meadow Lake that the member from Meadow Lake enjoyed so greatly, I notice that the majority of those people would have, in my mind . . . could be described as union members, when you look at the health care workers, the hospital workers, the Highways department, and Social Services. You had one meeting with someone outside of either union or politics. And I would classify politics as rural development because those people, in most cases, represent the rural RMs (rural municipality) and the smaller communities, the villages, etc.

So you had one meeting, from your description, with the business community and that being an hour

meeting with the chamber of commerce. Mr. Minister, when you look at the chamber of commerce and the other industries across this province, you're talking the people who hire, the people who create the jobs in this province, and that being small business. And yet on your typical day, they got one meeting of about an hour.

The people who create the jobs — the real jobs in this province — where something is made and there's a product at the end of the day that we sell and create all the other work in this province from. And I think that is a very poor performance, Mr. Minister, that you would provide them with only one hour. Because you have a broad range from A to Z of all the different kinds of jobs and industries there, and yet they received an hour.

And I think, Mr. Minister, it's extremely important that not only do you talk to your union colleagues, but that you talk to the people who do create the jobs in this province, because they're affected by your decisions, by the legislation that you bring forward.

And I would hope that your consultation would be a lot more in-depth than what you provided an example of today. Because you're looking at the people who we, as a province and you as government, are going to rely on to create these 16,000 jobs that you've promised since coming into government. Mind you the longer you stay in government the lower your expectations are of creating jobs. Even the Minister of Finance, in this budget, didn't bring forward much of a job creation aspect. Certainly not compared to last year when I believe it was going to be 8,000 or 9,000 jobs.

So, Mr. Minister, will you give the people of this province who create the jobs a greater opportunity to have consultation and input into this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I think the member will find when you get the list of people we met with, that about 60 to 70 per cent of the groups we met with were employers and not employees. The majority of the people we met with were employers, so I know the member will want to study that list with considerable care. And in order that he may do so, and in accordance with the comments which I've made earlier, I'm changing, if I might, to my role as assistant House Leader.

I move that we report progress in these estimates, Mr. Chairman.

(1200)

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

The Chair: — At this time I would like to ask the minister to please introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, to my left is Lynn Tulloch, acting director of finance

and administration; to my immediate left is Mr. Clare Kirkland, deputy minister; on my right is Bernie Churko, assistant deputy minister, policy and programs division; and behind me is Don Metz, assistant deputy minister, operations division.

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, welcome, and welcome to your assistants from your department. It will be an enjoyable task I'm sure for me to be able to find out where the money is being spent in the Department of Highways for this year. And I'm sure that the people of Saskatchewan will be interested in hearing your answers, as we present the questions to you, to determine whether or not they're getting fair value for the dollars that they are spending in their taxes.

Just off the top of my head to start with, Minister, we look at a budget of over \$5 billion for this province and yet the . . . and it looks to me like about a half a billion increase over a couple of years ago. Taxes people are complaining about are up all though the province on every front and in every sector, more and more money being squeezed out of fewer and fewer working people and going to pay yet an ever increasing amount for the government to spend.

And yet in your department, the Department of Highways, one of the lower cost departments for the province, yet one of the more important and obviously seen departments in the province . . . The Department of Highways is something that provides the road structure for our province that everybody pretty well sees and uses on a daily basis. So it's very critical to everyone that we have good roads.

So while I said it's not a real big department in terms of Health and Education, as far as cost, it is one of the more important things in most people's lives. After all, cars hurtling down the roads at 62 kilometres an hour hitting a broken piece of pavement can easily cost someone their life.

So I'd like to have you explain to us, Minister, why in a province that has so many roads, as we have because of our geography and the large size of our province, why have you not been able to be successful in getting the Minister of Finance to allocate you more dollars to your department on a prorated proportional basis with the increase of the taxes taken in by this province?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure the member just has to sit back and analyse the 10 years of the Tory administration where they spent a billion dollars a year more than they were taking in, causing a debt in this province of over \$12 billion, which means, Mr. Chairman, that we now have to spend over \$800 million a year in interest.

Well in spending \$850 million a year in interest, we find that each department in government has to take a little bit out of their spending to pay interest to Hong Kong, Zürich, the United States, eastern Canada. And certainly it disturbs us to have to do this, but we have

to play the hand that we were dealt with, Mr. Chairman. And that's what we are doing. We didn't, like some members, fold our hand and run. We're playing the hand that we were dealt with.

Highways in this province is a priority to this government. It's a priority to the people. We have an infrastructure, a \$6 billion infrastructure. We have 25 per cent of all the highways in Canada. And we intend to maintain them and protect them to the best of our ability within the financial constraints that we face because of the debt that your government caused.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, I asked you for an explanation and you were kind enough to give me one. But I have some problems with your answer because it really just doesn't wash. The reality of life is that you talk about playing with the deck you were dealt, or the hand you were dealt. The reality is that you are playing with a deck that's missing a few cards. And I'll go on to explain that.

You talk about the interest you have to pay at a time when interest rates have fallen from about the 12 per cent range since you took power, have fallen now to about the 4 per cent range. A few years before that, they peaked at 22 to 24 per cent. Now it seems to me in a world of diminishing costs your government is pretty inefficient at taking advantage of the real world around you and getting your costs in line with the kinds of interest rates that are available.

Perhaps you better hire one of my colleagues here to help you to figure out how to get a loan at 4 or 5 or 6 per cent, the going rates that the banks are offering these days, and stop throwing away the taxpayers' money on high interest rates to Germany and Hong Kong when you could have borrowed the money from your own people right at home at a lot less.

And my colleague mentions you could stop wasting a lot of taxpayers' money, and it's a good point. When you start throwing \$20,000 bills at fly prevention for one of your colleagues who has a fly problem, that in itself tells you the direction that this government is going in the waste and mismanagement of money. Not to mention that you are taking in a half a billion dollars more in taxes than you did before, and that proportional increase of tax money that you're taking in has not been reflected in the kind of dollars that have been allocated to your department.

And while I have no objection with you paying off part of the interest from your department and taking a fair proportional hit on those things that need to be paid for . . . Everybody has to do that in our society; that's commonly accepted.

It's being done in Alberta, it's being done in spades in Ontario where they've got a deficit that would make your head spin. But everybody is contributing — everybody is contributing — and that's fine. But the reality has to be here that the monies that are left over after you've paid off the interest that you're worried about, those are the monies now that we allocate to

the different departments and spend through the province.

And I'm saying that you must be a very weak minister if you haven't been able to convince the government to give you a proportion of that increase. That increase in taxation that is being taken in is not being reflected in the road building and road construction and road maintenance program that we have in this province. And I'm saying to you, what are you doing about that? You have to lobby harder because we've got some serious problems.

Now I want to get into the specifics of the way that the Department of Highways is running so that we can try to determine, Minister, if there is a way for you to provide better service to our community for the monies that you're spending, and to find out exactly where your priorities are and what your policies are.

So I want to start by asking you, Minister, could you tell us in a kind of a review formula for road crew staff — and I suppose you run your road crew staff under some kind of a formula — could you tell us the number of crew members per kilometre in the highway? Or how does that work where you determine the number of workers that you will have working in the field?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, the member opposite I guess does not realize what debt and deficit is all about. When you borrow money, you lock it in normally. So this is the situation of our debt. So whatever the interest rate is today, Mr. Member, does not mean that we have a reduction in the interest that we have to pay because that debt is locked in.

To your question, there are 128 crews working on asphalt highways, employing a total of 603 staff in summer and 450 in winter. There is an average of 37 kilometres per employee, and in the winter there's an average of 40. There are 19 crews working on gravel roads. There are a total of 47 staff in the summer and 37 in the winter. And that works out to 45 kilometres per employee in the summer and 28 kilometres in the winter.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister, for those direct figures. I want to assure you that I understand debt and deficit very well. In my previous workload in life was a farmer, so I can assure you that I know all about debt and deficit.

And I know something else about it, sir, that maybe you should pay attention to. The reality is that your government is charging a 10 per cent surtax on everybody's income tax; not that there's very many people left in Saskatchewan that can make an income that's taxable. But on those that do have to pay taxes, most of those who are on fixed incomes working for some level of government, you are charging them a 10 per cent surtax to pay off the debt in this province.

And you say that the debt is locked in. Then are you not telling these people that that money can't be

applied to where you told them it was going to be applied? Are you saying that no matter what you do you can't pay off the debt because it's locked in? And if it isn't locked in and you can pay it off with that 10 per cent surtax that you're charging everybody, then in reality you can renegotiate your interest rates. And I say to you that your government is doing a very bad job of that.

But I want to get back to these estimates on the Department of Highways, because you're not performing your job in the Department of Highways the way you should be either and we want to help you to try and get that done.

I've seen roads that are an absolute disgrace. And we're going to get into this, and we're going to get specific about roads, individual ones even as we go along, because we cannot tolerate the way that the road system in this province is being handled and treated now. So we're going to have to build on this a little bit at a time.

And I want to know in this 45-kilometre formula that you have developed for the summer and 28 for the winter, have there been any changes to this formula in the past year?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well first of all I want to say that this government did look for all the expenses that it could trim from each department to meet the needs of the interest payments. It had to increase taxes unfortunately. And I'm sure you apologize to the people that you meet on the street. And the Saskatchewan people are very supportive of this.

In 1996-97 the balanced-budget plan is in place and it's on target. This year's deficit will be the lowest since 1982 — the lowest per capita deficit in the country. So I believe that we are doing our job and with full support and full thanks has to go to the Saskatchewan people.

In regards to the other portion of your question, there has been no major changes in the last year.

Mr. Goohsen: — I thought, Minister, that we had heard that there was going to be a reduction in the number of highway workers to correspond with certain cut-backs that were announced in the past while. And I wonder if you'd just think about that for a minute, because it seems to me that there were a fair number of people that were laid off in different government departments and that Highways in fact was affected by that. And I'd like to know where those jobs came from and who hasn't been replaced and how this is all working out.

(1215)

With regards to your balanced budget, sir, I'm quite happy to hear that you're going to have a balanced budget and that your yearly deficit will be down, even though you haven't allocated any money to pay off the debt and are jiggling the figures on your balances within the Crowns in order to manipulate what it will

appear to be, a break-even point.

But if you do accomplish that, at least we will know that you will have 5-billion-plus dollars to spend on actual needs of the province. And that should indicate to you, Minister, that you should get a bigger proportion of that money to spend on highways in this province. Because after all, then you will have that extra half a billion dollars of tax money to use for the government purposes. And your share of that should come to a fair, tidy sum and we ought to be able to get the No. 1 Highway from Tompkins to Alberta double-laned, for example.

Now it seems to me that if you're going in that direction, what you'll want to do is to make sure that you get your share of that money to spend on roads like that so that we can get some of these problems with our highways corrected.

So with the changes that you've made and the reductions, I think maybe I want to get your answer about the people that were laid off first before I go into this next segment.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — In the 1994-95 budget there are eight positions. Seven are early retirement situations and one moved down to the crew, to the work crew, and that were the positions that will be affected this year.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Could the minister estimate and describe any projects to be included within the Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure program.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you. The Department of Highways have put some projects forward to the infrastructure committee, the provincial-federal infrastructure committee, and we have heard no word at this point in time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. I'm glad that you're at least getting into the feel of this thing and starting to work towards getting some work done. Does the minister intend to use this program as sort of a reverse offloading? In other words, does his department intend to scale back its commitment to road building and maintenance in the province in proportion with the funding from this source?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — As you probably are aware, Mr. Member, that we do not know and we did not know if any of our suggested projects will be accepted under the infrastructure program, so there has been no scaling down of our budget because of the infrastructure program.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well that leads me to wonder, when do you expect that you would get some kind of information or a commitment? Have you, for example, received any commitments from the federal government regarding these projects, or have you just applied to the provincial arm of this project?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, the infrastructure

program works with a federal person on the committee, a provincial person on the committee. It's a program that is generally funded by one-third federal government, one-third provincial government, and one-third municipal government. In the case of Highways of course, it would be one-third federal, two-thirds provincial.

And so we have no word. We do not know when we will receive word of our requested projects. I can't answer any more clearly than that to the hon. member.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well in spite of the fact that you aren't sure if you're being clear, it does help because you've told me now that you're probably not involving any municipalities, urban or rural, in the projects that you are proposing; that you in fact then would be paying two-thirds of the cost of these suggested projects from government coffers — one-third out of the Department of Highways, one-third from a different department of provincial government, and one-third federal. Is that clear, or have I got it wrong?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Some of the projects will be funded of course one-third, one-third, one-third with Highways — hopefully. And that's if perhaps the private sector would find some funding. Perhaps there's a special project in a municipality that doesn't fit in with their section of the infrastructure program that they would apply separately, with the Saskatchewan government and federal government as partners.

Mr. Goohsen: — My understanding, Minister, was that these projects depend on municipal applications for projects. Are you saying to us that there are some projects that can be done without municipal participation, that that rule can be waived? Just to follow that a little further while you're discussing this with your assistants there, does this not throw into disarray the strategy planning the department may have already done?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — We in Highways have proposals. They have been sent to the committee and we would hope to hear from the committee in the near future.

Mr. Goohsen: — Would there be any reason why you might not be able to share what those proposals are with us? If there are no reasons, would you share with us what those proposals are?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I would, through Mr. Chairman, that this might not be the best thing to do at this time because some of the communities that may be involved or some of the other municipalities or some of the private sector people have not maybe completed their work in regards to the projects. So I would think it would be inappropriate at this time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Have these projects been put into the budgetary process for your department for this year? And I know that you will also

want to tell us whether or not there are plans to consult with the municipalities, to coordinate their projects with whatever strategic plans the department may have drawn up, but also to allow them time to put these plans into their own budgetary processes.

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

Mr. Draper: — To introduce some guests, Mr. Chairman, sir.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Draper: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce you and the other members to some guests sitting in the west gallery there. They are Debbie McDonald, who's my constituency assistant, and her daughter Alexis, who she brought in to see the workings of the legislature. And I'd like you to join with me in welcoming them to this House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, there is a separate section in *Estimates* under the Saskatchewan infrastructure program on page 109 of the *Estimates* book. There is a fund set up for the infrastructure program, so it is not included in the Highways and Transportation budget.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay. I want to know then, Minister, are you going to do some consulting with the municipalities to coordinate these projects, to lead you into the rest of the question that I'd asked. Will you be consulting with them, meeting with them, giving them an opportunity to know where they can expect to go, so that they build these plans into their budgetary processes for the year?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The answer is yes.

Mr. Goohsen: — I know they'll appreciate hearing that. At the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) meeting last month, Minister, the province's civic officials expressed a number of concerns with the Department of Highways about the operations and the plans. And particularly they wanted to know when the province would complete the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway between the Alberta border and I think it's around some place on this side of Tompkins.

Now can the Minister respond to these concerns which were expressed I guess in the *Leader-Post* on February 3, and obviously you probably followed the SUMA convention and are aware of those concerns,

but we would like an answer to those concerns about that particular highway.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our priority of course is to work on the twinning of all highways in Saskatchewan that should be twinned. Gull Lake to the Alberta border is certainly one of those. Under the SHIP (strategic highway improvement program) which was signed last year, we are spending \$70 million on Highway No. 16 from Saskatoon to North Battleford. The reason this highway was given priority is because of the traffic which was about \$1,200 more . . . 1,200 cars per day, and also the accident rate and the fatality rate. We would hope that we would be able to work with the federal government to sign more deals like this, that would enable us to twin the Highway No. 1, not only from Gull Lake to the Alberta border, but from Indian Head to the Manitoba border and the remainder of 16 as well.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Chairman, that the \$855 million that we have to pay in interest this year, would have twinned the No. 1 from the Alberta border four and a half times. We would have been able to twin Gull Lake to the Alberta border twenty-five times, Mr. Chairman. So this is the effect that our interest payments have on this province.

(1230)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister, for that political analysis of the province's financial problems. I have a little problem with your argument though, Minister. It seems that the Minister of Health said that \$855 million was all coming out of her budget, that she could no longer provide health care services because of that interest.

Then I heard the Minister of Education suggest that she couldn't provide education because of that. Now that leaves about \$5 billion that you have to spend over and above that, and it seems to me that you're all using the same scapegoat here. And I suggest that you stop all trying to push one another off of that scapegoat and start talking about the \$5 billion that you do have to spend and tell us where you're going to spend it and why the Department of Highways has taken the short end, quite frankly, of the budgetary money that is available, and why you're not spending it to improve the roads, when you make silly comments like \$800 million could double-lane the whole Trans-Canada Highway, I obviously have to respond with something silly like, the deficit in Ontario is much higher than ours, billions of dollars more — probably hundreds of millions of dollars more in interest being paid on their debt than on ours, then most likely we could double-lane the highway all clean across Canada.

And what good would that do us? What kind of help is that rhetoric going to provide to the Saskatchewan people who know very well that you have \$5 billion of money that you can and do have available, to spend. There's no comfort for people to listen to the rhetoric. What they want to know is what you're going to do about the actual problems with the money that you do

have to spend.

And that leads me to the question, Minister, about the SUMA meeting again, taking you back to that, because at that same meeting the mayor of Gull Lake, Gerry Elmslie, expressed concerns that Highway No. 37 had become eroded by heavy commercial traffic. Can the minister speak to the condition of No. 37 Highway and tell us if he intends any direct further funding to the upgrading of that particular road?

And while you're talking about that road, because the No. 1 Highway and the twinning of that road has become such a contentious issue and is in the same area, you may want to respond further to your direct plans of future beginning of the construction of that double-laning in that area, as well as some specific dates that you might consider working on the 37 Highway problem that the mayor of Gull Lake expressed to you.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly agree with the member opposite that we would all, each and every department, would like a little bit of the \$855 million that we pay in interest, and I can understand that, in place of it going to bond agencies and financial institutions outside of this country.

We are spending \$62 million this year on our highways. There is \$22 million being spent in rural Saskatchewan. With the addition of some infrastructure funding, we will be at a level that we were last year. And I think that's remarkable, considering the debt that this province has.

We have excellent maintenance crews in our province. We have an excellent maintenance department that keep our highways as best they can. And in regards to No. 37 Highway, I'm sure you're aware that it was your government that pulled the urban assistance program in 1990-91.

We realize that communities would like to see some help in regards to highways running through their communities. The Transportation Policy Council which is made up of department officials, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA, are looking at this issue. But with our financial situation at this time, it's going to be very difficult to provide extra funding to urban municipalities in regards to highways running through their communities. But we certainly intend to look at this problem, and in consultation with communities and SUMA and SARM people.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and your officials. First of all, I'm going to start out by saying thank you. That may be just a little unheard of at times, but I'm certain the people that travel No. 9 Highway south of Whitewood in the Kenosee park area really appreciate the fact that Highways finally took a serious look at that intersection going into the main . . . or the turn-off onto the Kenosee park access since it was right at the top of a hill. For a long period of time

the highway kind of converged right at the top where people were turning on and it made it very difficult.

There was negotiations over a period of years with Highways to try and get Highways to extend that widening and lengthening it so that if traffic was proceeding up the hill and traffic was coming out of the main intersection, it would give room for the traffic that was moving right through to continue on.

And so the fact that it's been completed and upgraded, I want to commend the Highway officials for having taken that consideration, as it certainly has alleviated not only congestion, but the fact that it was somewhat of a traffic hazard.

Fortunately there weren't any major mishaps, but there were certainly some close calls. And people really appreciate that. The village of Kenosee certainly appreciates it, and certainly the department officials . . . Parks officials as well.

Mr. Minister, you made a comment about your budget being somewhat similar to where it was last year. And if I'm not mistaken — I just didn't quite catch the number — I'm not sure if it was in the neighbourhood of 67 million. I wonder if you could just give us an indication of what you're budgeting for highway expenditure and construction this year.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Highways budget in construction is \$62.5 million this year.

Mr. Toth: — It's 62.5 million for this year. Mr. Minister, what I'm wondering, and I'm just going over it, I notice . . . certainly No. 9, just a little north of where I happen to live south of Whitewood, it was resurfaced last year. And I notice a fair sized hole developing in the road. And that may have been patched already, because I don't think they could afford . . . the department, or the Highways personnel locally couldn't afford to let that hole continue to expand.

Considering the difficult season that most contractors were working with last year, the weather conditions, I'm wondering if your department has been called or if there are a number of areas where you're finding that some of the construction last year is not standing up. And I would think it would be based on the weather circumstances.

Are there any construction projects that are going to have to be upgraded or be revisited this year, and if so, what kind of a cost will that be to the department?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, certainly we have to revisit in some cases, or some repairs have to be done, but we don't see this more than usual.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, how many projects are being carried over from the 1993 construction year?

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

Mrs. Teichrob: — With leave, Mr. Chairman, to

introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mrs. Teichrob: — It's my pleasure, Mr. Chairman, to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly, 39 grade 7 and 8 students from Sister O'Brien School, which is located in my riding of Saskatoon River Heights in Saskatoon, on a visit to the legislature today and to Regina. I expect to be meeting them later on to answer their questions about the nature of the inspirational dialogue that's happening here this morning.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them to Regina and to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, I'm sure the member did receive a copy of the projects this year. There are about 25 projects that are carry-overs and I would be more than happy to supply the member with the information as to the exact projects if he would like to request that.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, regarding the 25 carry-overs, I would take it then that in the budget year 1993, these projects that due to the unfavourable weather conditions that were faced last year in the construction season, those budgeted amounts will be carried over into this year and that would be a budget . . . You've got 62.5 million for construction this year. Is that including last year's carry-over or are we looking at this year's construction plus last year's carry-over and we'd be looking at say a figure in the neighbourhood of maybe \$90 million of construction to take place this year?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The carry-over in each year is projects only, and it comes then from this year's budget. Am I clear to the hon. member? And this is normal procedure from year to year that if there is a carry-over at the end of the year any projects are carried over . . . we're not using 1993 money any more but we're using this year's budget.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying then, Mr. Minister, if you had \$62.5 million for construction last year and, just for rough figures, 10 projects didn't proceed because timing didn't allow it . . . and I'm just, a rough guess — maybe we've got about \$25 million. The actual construction last year would have been . . . or dollars used for construction would have been more in the 42 to 45 million versus the 62 million.

You come into this year. The project carry-overs then

are part of this year's budget; we don't really add it on. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, you indicated that there was a pamphlet that came out from the department regarding projects; and yes, I remember seeing the pamphlet. Where's most of the construction taking place? Is it fairly . . . is it say in the northern half of the province, in the western side of the province? Is my colleague from Maple Creek getting most of the money or are we . . . where is the money really being handled?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — It's distributed by engineering requirements. And it's spread out fairly equally, I believe, across the province but I haven't really taken a close look at it. But I can provide the member with a map if he wishes. A lot of the work is in regards to the SHIP program, so we're looking at a cross-Canada network, like No. 16 again will have considerable amount of work.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, my colleagues have raised the twinning of Highway No. 1 west of Maple Creek I believe, certainly of course representing the eastern side of the province, and I believe Manitoba, the province of Manitoba, was within a few kilometres of twinning No. 1 to the Saskatchewan border.

Is the province at the present time looking at further twinning of No. 1, Indian Head and east, towards the Manitoba border?

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I say to the hon. member that No. 1 remains a priority. The reason the funding went into 16 last year was because of the traffic counts. On the highway between Saskatoon and North Battleford the daily average traffic was 3,500 vehicles per day. The Gull Lake to the Alberta border is 2,300, and that's approximate figures.

The cost of the highway between North Battleford and Saskatoon is \$35 million. The cost of the highway between Gull Lake and the Alberta border is \$32 million. The section from Indian Head to the Manitoba border is \$52 million.

We will continue to work with the federal government on a national highway program. Perhaps it's similar to SHIP or whatever it might be, but I'm thinking that they are interested in it, and we certainly are. We haven't got enough money on our own to proceed with twinning of the No. 1 at this time. It is a priority.

It's interesting to note that the federal government in Canada provides about 6 per cent of the funding to the national highway structure. It's the lowest in all the industrial countries. The next lowest is the United States, I believe, at about 38 per cent. So we have to convince that the federal government has some responsibility in our national highway infrastructure.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That was my next question: how much does the federal government commit to the national highway program? You're telling us today 6 per cent is what you can expect the federal government to put into the national highway program.

Now when we're talking of national highway program, I take it that No. 1 would be a national highway. And I'm wondering, is No. 16 as well considered part of the national program? And if you're looking at 6 per cent, how many actual dollars are coming to the province of Saskatchewan regarding highway funding and highway construction? And of the 62.5, how much is funding from the federal government or is there additional funding over and above the 62.5?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — At this time any federal program is ad hoc, sort of. It's on agreements that the province can make with the federal government.

All provinces are interested in developing a highway, a national highway program. Under SHIP, the agreement that was signed, the cost-sharing is on a 50/50 split, so the \$70 million that will be spent in Saskatchewan over the next five years will be 35 provincial and 35 federal.

Highway 16 is a consideration under the national transportation network. And federal money to be used this year under the SHIP program will be \$8 million and it will be matched by the province's \$8 million.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I may have missed it. I don't know if you indicated to my colleague how far . . . or west you're proceeding with twinning of Highway No. 16, where it is today, and where you hope to be at the end of this construction season?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Through Mr. Chairman, in 1994 there are 11.8 kilometres on Highway 16 east of Fielding to east of Maymont. There are 12.03 kilometres east of Maymont to east of Ruddell. There is 14.78 kilometres east of Ruddell to west of Denholm, and then west of Denholm to the existing four-lane which is another 14.5 kilometres, and there Radisson to east of Fielding 12.76 kilometres. I could also provide the member with a map that may better explain that.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:54 p.m.