

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Due to a power failure a portion of the Legislative Assembly proceedings were not able to be recorded and transcribed.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: — Order. I'm told that we are ready to proceed so I will return to the item on the agenda that we were not able to do before. We will revert to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Meadow Lake Northwest Trade Fair

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend the town of Meadow Lake was the site of the fourth annual Northwest Trade Fair. This event is sponsored by the Meadow Lake winter festival committee and the Meadow Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, under the very capable leadership of President Heather Heddon.

Mr. Speaker, there were over 120 booths with exhibits by local businesses and by exhibitors from across Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba. Business people from across western Canada are quickly discovering that our little corner in north-west Saskatchewan is rapidly becoming the economic centre of the region.

Over 6,000 people came through the doors during the three days. There were exhibits on everything from tractor-trailers to candied apples. A new event was the futurity heifer show which acknowledges the important role that ranching plays in the local and provincial economy.

There were some interesting booths given to fund-raising by local charities including, Mr. Speaker, a pig kissing contest sponsored by the local 4-H. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was a live pig, Stella was her name I believe, and I was right in the very middle of the whole thing. Rumour had it the pig was asking to be blindfolded. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, I did not win; that honour went to Ken Schiller of the CJNS radio station.

The Northwest Trade Fair is another example of the vitality of Saskatchewan people and of our economy. I congratulate all involved, especially key organizers, Elaine Yachuk, Oral Zacharias, Bev Lamon and Sandra Green, and I look forward to next year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Big Valley Jamboree

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to take this time to update the Assembly on the Big Valley Jamboree, slated for July 13 to 17, held in Craven.

This year's country music event promises to be the biggest and the best and the most successful and profitable yet.

This year's jamboree is catering to some of the needs of the families. These changes include sections of reserved seating, reserved camping, and an area set aside for children.

This year's Big Valley Jamboree will surely please both the tourists and music lovers with a line-up of talented entertainers. It includes established stars and up-and-comers as well as Canadian and American. The tentative line-up includes Mark Chesnutt, Holly Dunn, Martina McBride, Confederate Railroad, Joe Diffie, Tracy Lawrence, and Merle Haggard.

Mr. Speaker, Big Valley has become one of Saskatchewan's primary tourist attractions and a major employer and contributor to the economy. And I wanted to take this opportunity to wish the family in charge all the best at Big Valley this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Creation of Small-business Development Program

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to advise the Assembly of an announcement we made yesterday in Prince Albert that helps build on our *Partnership for Renewal*. Yesterday the Prince Albert Regional Economic Development Authority and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) jointly announced the creation of a small-business development program.

This program will give business people and entrepreneurs access to SIAST facilities and instructors at the Woodland campus in Prince Albert. Through this program business people will be able to develop new programs, produce products in a cost-effective manner. It will make use of the existing SIAST professionals in building business skills and strategy.

This program will assist inventors and entrepreneurs, especially farmers, to construct prototypes of this product. It will do so by giving these people access on cost-recovery basis to the world-class facilities at the Woodland campus of SIAST. These people will be given access to shop instructors, technology.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have good ideas. Often what they need is the business expertise and a facility to develop this concept. This program brings together the enterprises of REDA (regional economic development authority) with the facility of SIAST, to create a strong small-business development plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel on Enterprise

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker and MLAs (Member of

the Legislative Assembly) and guests, I invite each of you to watch a very special television program that will be airing across the province of Saskatchewan on Saskatchewan Television Network tomorrow evening.

The program is an episode of the series *Enterprise* which profiles successful Saskatchewan businesses and their efforts to create new business and employment throughout the province.

I'm proud to say that tomorrow night's show deals with one of Saskatchewan most outstanding companies, SaskTel. Most of the members will know of SaskTel's world leadership in technologies such as the use of fibre optics and digital switching. The program will show how SaskTel parlayed that experience into a contract to install the data communication system inside the Channel Tunnel — the biggest construction project of the 20th century.

The show also profiles SaskTel's successful investment in LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) cable communications, a company supplying cable television and telephone service in the area of Leicester, England.

I had the opportunity to preview this show on Monday night and I can tell you it's both educational and entertainment. So if you are near a TV set, tune into *Enterprise* at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday evening on one of the stations of the Saskatchewan Television Network — CKCK in Regina, CFQC in Saskatoon . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Opposition Reform Bills

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, today is private members' day, and once again we are hopeful that we will be given the opportunity to debate one of the seven private members' Bills that we have brought forward in this session.

This is the 60th day, Mr. Premier, of this legislative sitting, and to date not one of our Bills has been allowed to progress past first reading. Mr. Premier, Saskatchewan people are demanding real reform of this legislature — reform that goes well beyond watching the Minister of Labour play with his laptop computer and listening to speeches about Smokey the Bear's birthday.

Mr. Premier, we are ready to debate any one of our reform initiatives. You can even pick which one you would like, sir. Mr. Premier, will you and your government give leave to move to one of our reform Bills today, right after question period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the premiss of the Leader of the Opposition's question is one that I do not accept. The premiss is that there has not been substantive and substantial reform in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. And I think there has been over the last couple of years.

I will spare the member and members in this House the recitation of the very many reforms which we have implemented, ranging all the way from the mandatory calling of a by-election within six months of the vacancy, to the various tabling of documents, freedom of information Acts, and a variety of other reforms — Board of Internal Economy reforms.

These are all ongoing, they're progressive. We want to continue to reform and to make this Assembly as responsive as possible.

Now the hon. member asks the question about debating his proposals — that's exactly what private members' day is all about. I welcome the debate in the legislature whenever the legislature's agenda permits for this and other ideas. And the House will dispose of the recommendations as it sees fit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, your unwillingness to even consider ideas that come from other parties is one of the reasons that so many voters in this province are cynical about our process, sir. Another reason, Mr. Premier, is the rampant political patronage that we've seen from your government. It's already been established in the last two and one half years that you have institutionalized patronage in government in this province.

Mr. Premier, we now see the Liberal leader jumping on the patronage bandwagon, Mr. Speaker. In an article in the North Battleford *News-Optimist*, the Liberal leader condemned the NDP (New Democratic Party) record, and I quote, for incompetent patronage appointments. However, she then went on to say that if she became premier, she said — and I quote — that doesn't mean that Liberals won't get jobs, they're as competent.

Now the point being, Mr. Premier, this is exactly why we need an all-party committee of this House — New Democrats, Liberals, and Conservatives — to make appointments to boards and commissions in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Premier, will your government give leave to go immediately to Bill 31 right after question period so that this issue can be debated in the House and the issue of patronage be taken to a better way? Mr. Premier, would you do that?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question most specifically and directly put to me in the only way that I can. This is private

members' day and members of this House are on this day dedicated to the discussion of issues which are of importance to them. And they'll put them on the order paper and they'll be discussed, and whether leave is or isn't granted, it depends upon the members who deal with the business. That's one of the reforms that the hon. member himself tells us that he advocates.

As to the first aspect of his question, I of course am not going to be here to defend the Liberal approach on patronage. There are many examples of it already. I have a quotation from the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* here involving the former mayor, a recently elected Liberal MP (Member of Parliament), where the headline, under a story written by Mr. Greg Urbanoski says: "Kirkby job creation shows old-style politics in action." But that's not for me to defend; that's for the Leader of the Liberal Party to defend.

I guess what I want to say before I take my place, with respect to the first aspect of your question, is that the quotation that you so readily attach to the Leader of the Liberal Party, I should caution you, sir, comes also from the mouths of members of your party.

Because I have here the March 28, 1994, third-page *Star-Phoenix* report. I don't read the *Star-Phoenix* very often, if at all, but someone brought this to my attention. And would it be surprising to you if I read this quotation, from Senator Tkachuk: "Patronage to me is negative only when you put someone incompetent in that position."

Which strikes me strikingly similar to exactly what the Leader of the Liberal Party said with respect to her approach.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, another one of the Bills that we've introduced addresses the inadequacies of the current Board of Internal Economy and the guidelines attached to it. For weeks now your government has been dragging its feet, claiming to be waiting for information from other jurisdictions. Mr. Premier, we started calling around yesterday, and by the end of the afternoon legislation dealing with this matter from both the B.C. (British Columbia) and Alberta legislatures have been faxed to our office. I'm sure, Mr. Premier, that we will have the information from all of the other provinces and the federal parliament in our office by the end of the week.

Mr. Premier, will you stop making excuses and start solving the situation? Will you and your government give leave to move to Bill 51 immediately after question period so that we can deal with this very important issue in the minds of Saskatchewan voters?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again I find it a bit contradictory and confusing, to put it mildly, to hear the Leader of the Opposition on the one hand talk about democratic reform — one aspect of which I

would have thought would be on private members' day for private members to have a say about what is given leave and what isn't given leave — on the other side of the coin, the assumption behind his question is that somehow I am going to give leave, or somebody in the front benches is going to give leave and not give leave.

On the substance of the preliminaries to the question, namely the issue of the Board of Internal Economy, I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition that it is not very much conducive to supporting democratic reform to drag in to the debate the Board of Internal Economy chaired by Mr. Speaker, who I believe maintains the confidence of this House as the Chair of this House, but also as the chair of the Board of Internal Economy, and the officers of the Board of Internal Economy whose job it is to prepare the necessary information in comparison of the legislation to determine what, if anything, we should do on this outstanding issue which you present.

That something needs to be done I think is quite obvious. You're doing your research — good for you. Give the research to the Board of Internal Economy in due course; it will be debated and determined by the Board of Internal Economy. But don't bypass the process which I think is now well enjoined in trying to resolve this and other issues. Let it play itself out as is the proper and democratic way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

No-fault Insurance

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, yesterday I raised some concerns about the issue of compensation for impaired drivers under your no-fault insurance scheme. The vice-president for SGI later confirmed that these are very valid concerns and something that SGI needs to consider. In fact this problem has been identified by at least two internal SGI studies.

Mr. Minister, impaired driving is a criminal activity, a criminal activity which sometimes results in serious injuries or even death, and it's hardly proper and fair that we should be introducing legislation that provides greater rewards for people who engage in a criminal activity.

Mr. Minister, what specific actions are you going to take to address this fact, that no-fault insurance will actually improve compensation packages for drinking and driving?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, in regards to the question, it is indeed a very valid concern, and I looked at the issue and a lot of the people do not realize that there is no coverage in regards to the payment of the car when a person, you know, that has been impaired. And that's the way it was before and

that's the way it will be in the future.

As well as in regards to the rise in premium rates, a person will also be nabbed in regards to the premium rates. I think that is very clear in regards to the plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the aspect of issues, some of the public have been raising issues, you know, to me in this regard. I might state this: if there is a tremendous, tremendous concern on this area, it is possible, you know, to look at the legislation, whether it could be looked at this year or next year, and see what the public response is.

I know that The Automobile Accident Insurance Act is not the only place to look at this, Mr. Speaker. We can look at it under the highways and Vehicle Administration Act and we would be able to analyse the situation further. But I don't know that it is indeed a concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you obviously don't have a very firm grasp on what the no-fault insurance is about because I didn't ask you a question about vehicle repairs and I didn't ask you anything about premiums, but about personal injuries. And before you introduce legislation, you should at least find out what all the problems are going to be and address it as the legislation is introduced, not wait for a year after the problems have developed even greater.

Your vice-president of SGI said yesterday that the government will have to consider amending the legislation or introducing companion legislation to deal with this problem. Are you going to do that or are you going to withdraw the Bill and correct it?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised at the member. I mean his party has been governing, you know, had been governing the province for many years and for him to say that we have no grasp of issues . . . I mean, in many years a lot of people suffered, you know, under their governance.

I know that when we look at the issue of impaired driving, you have to consider certain things, Mr. Speaker. You ought to consider the fact that the person may have children and a spouse at home. When you cut those to zero, then the children are left without the food and the basics for life in this province. Those are the type of issues that we have to consider before rushing into a decision in having absolutely no coverage on impaired drivers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have considered, you know, this issue and will be considering it further in the future, depending on the input and consultation that the people bring forward to us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I find it surprising that you're defending

drinking and driving or drunken driving because of children. What of the children of victims of drinking and driving, Mr. Minister? Mr. Minister, what are you going to do about the concerns of drunk drivers and no-fault insurance?

Are you going to pull the legislation and correct it and other areas in this piece of legislation that will not work, Mr. Minister? What are you going to do about it? Will you pull this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to drinking and driving, we are continuing the process of consultation. If we have a certain and qualitative degree of input by people where there is a tremendous number, it is possible that legislation may be amended this time or next year. It depends on the degree.

I mean when you say that the person looks at only the drunk driving, maybe you don't care about the family. Maybe you don't care that the children may go hungry in that situation. Those are the type of things that you have to consider when you're looking at legislation. On the one hand you say, don't rush into things; now you're telling me to rush into things. Make up your mind.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Expansion of Casinos

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier this afternoon.

Mr. Premier, your government did not campaign on casino expansion. Nor did it campaign on gambling as a source of economic development. You've said that you don't support gambling. In fact in an article in the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* in 1990 as leader of the opposition, you said, and I quote:

The spin-off benefits from a casino would be outweighed by the difficulties in control, policing, and the socio-economic benefits. There have to be some ethical questions asked about how casino activities would affect families going after the quick fix.

End of quote.

Mr. Premier, if you don't support casino expansion, why are you expanding them?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, let me answer the member from Greystone in this fashion.

I recall in the last session of the legislature the member from Greystone encouraging the government to hurry up and introduce the VLT (video lottery terminal) program because we were losing 50 to \$60 million. And, Madam Member, you know that. You're quoted in *Hansard*. It's there.

This session of the legislature she says to members of the government side, slow down and don't expand so quickly. She needs a little more time to have a look at it.

Well I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have spent an awful lot of time consulting with the people of Saskatchewan, putting together a partnership with the aboriginal people of this province to try and create some job opportunities for those who have never had jobs.

Now it's fine for the member from Greystone, who took a 37 per cent increase in her own personal salary, to attack job opportunities for aboriginal people. At the same time her chief executive officer, Emmet Reidy, was the proponent of gaming in Moose Jaw in 1988. At the same time her campaign manager, her constituency assistant, had been involved in gaming for 10 long years, making private profits from gambling, and it's fine for her to be personally involved in gambling but still on the other hand to attack this government's position with respect to controlled expansion of gaming.

So I say to the member from Greystone, maybe it's time you stood up and explained where you come from on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I used to own the back end of a cheap horse, Mr. Minister, and you remind me of him very often, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, listen very carefully: I do oppose your government's gambling policy. Listen again, Mr. Minister: I do oppose your government's gambling policy. And for weeks I have been trying to bring this issue to debate in this legislature, which is on the blues, including today.

The NDP gambling policy in this province is destructive, it is divisive, and even more poorly planned than the rest of your initiatives. And your policy, Mr. Minister, is greedy and it is unfair to local people and it is unfair to non-profit organizations.

The people of Assiniboia — and the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg should be standing up talking about this, Mr. Minister — we'll see \$720,000 leave their community in one year from VLT machines; that is \$2,579 for every man, woman, and child. And what have you done to measure what your Premier, when he was leader of the opposition, calls the socio-economic problems? What have you done to measure how much damage this is going to do in a town like Assiniboia and hundreds of other communities that when you suck that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say this: the member from Greystone surrounds her political staff . . . herself with political staff who have a history of involvement in gambling. In the 1980s these private

operators of bingos expanded from \$4 million to over \$120 million — a hundred million dollars in profits. And that was fine then. And that was fine for her political staff.

Emmet Reidy, her chief executive officer, was the proponent of a casino established in Moose Jaw for private gain. He was the one who proposed that he would install electronic bingo games in this province, I say to the member from Greystone, for private gain. And I say to the member, she was involved in the horse-racing industry and it must have been for some reason. Because I know that people all over this province gamble on horses.

Now if gambling is good enough for her for private gain and if it's good enough for Emmet Reidy for private gain, and if it's good enough for Elaine Hughston for private gain, it should be good enough for the province of Saskatchewan to take revenues from gaming and put it back into the people's hands through health care and education and the reduction of the deficit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, your gutter tactics only prove the point that you don't have a strategy.

In the same article from which I quoted earlier, Mr. Minister, your Leader of the New Democratic Party, the Premier of this province, said, and I quote: that the provincial government had forgotten about the Main Streets of Saskatchewan in its preoccupation with megaprojects.

Somehow you and the government have come full circle so that you can build mega-casinos as your megaprojects in Saskatoon and Regina, and you can suck three-quarters of a million dollars a year out of small communities like Assiniboia, and that somehow this is going to serve to revive the Main Streets of Saskatchewan.

Just where is your economic evidence, your economic evidence, Mr. Minister, to support your gambling policy? And how do you expect people to make good decisions about what needs to be done, without the facts?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member from Greystone that this is the most phoney performance that I've ever seen in this legislature.

I ask you, member, were you involved in horse-racing or weren't you? Was your chief executive officer the proponent of gambling in Moose Jaw in 1998 or wasn't he? Was Elaine Hughston involved in gambling for 10 years or wasn't she?

And I say to you this, Madam, you should answer this House. Do you support jobs for aboriginal people in the gaming industry or don't you? Do you support low income people, people in this province who have

never been employed, who have the opportunity to be involved in meaningful jobs in the gaming industry or this province or don't you? Where do you stand, Madam Member? I tell you what you stand for, you stand for every side of this issue — personal involvement, opposition to gambling — and I say to you, you've sat on the fence on the issue more than once. Why don't you just stand up and enunciate what your position is, so the people of this province don't believe and consider to believe that you're acting in a hypocritical fashion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Will members please come to order.

French Language Training in Justice System

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, it has come to our attention that your government has signed an agreement with the federal government to provide French language development for Provincial Court judges and Crown prosecutors. Mr. Minister, this may seem like an insignificant amount of funds. However, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could let the Assembly know today the number of Provincial Court cases that have been tried in French in the province of Saskatchewan in the past year.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the member is correct that we recently signed an agreement with the federal government covering this subject. It was not the first such agreement of course; it is one of a line of such agreements that have been entered into between the federal government and the governments of Saskatchewan. It provides a French language training for judges, for prosecutors, and for court officials.

I can't answer the member's question as to how many trials we had in French in the last period. I know there were at least two in the last year; and it is a service that we must provide as the members opposite well know. We have no alternative but to provide that capability in Saskatchewan and we do.

My understanding is that under the agreement the matter . . . the costing of this program will be borne by the federal government. And obviously it's a worthwhile program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I think when the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, in fact all taxpayers, take a look at this, they begin to ask themselves, we have governments all across this country — this government in Saskatchewan — talking about deficit reduction, yet we continue to spend money on classes and in this case classes where we're going to send Provincial Court judges and Crown prosecutors, maybe take a couple of lessons, be tutored for . . . through a couple of lessons, and I'm not exactly sure that that is going to be money well spent; that in fact the judges or the Crown prosecutors will have a grasp

of the language in order to conduct a trial properly.

Mr. Minister, I understand that you do have obligations under the Criminal Code, but to quote the top legal officer in this province, there is law and there is justice. Mr. Minister, could you use your powers of arbitrary justice to cancel this expenditure and, on behalf of taxpayers, spend this money more wisely and perhaps put it toward the provincial debt?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I want to say to the member again that this is a long-standing, ongoing program for the training of a certain number of judges and court officials. It was begun under your government, if not previously, and is simply a matter of carrying forward.

We have to be able to provide a bilingual capacity in our courts. It's a constitutional matter and we have no choice. So the member is asking me to do something which I simply can't do.

Besides, the members will also well know that some of the judges who have been attending these programs have become very proficient in French, to the point where they can conduct French trials.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce some guests?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, sitting in your gallery are four gentlemen from the National Transportation Agency, and I want to introduce them. They are Ken Ritter, Tom Maville, Seymour Isenberg, and Don Rees. And they met with our caucus this morning and I understand they are going to meet with the Liberal caucus this afternoon and the NDP caucus tomorrow.

And we met with them earlier and they presented a very good bird's-eye view of the aspect of transportation in western Canada and throughout Canada. And I would like the members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these people here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I would like to join with the member from Morse in welcoming the people from the National Transportation Agency, and look forward to meeting with them soon. And welcome them here to Regina and hope that your stay and your meetings are very rewarding.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that we convert the question to motion for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Question 58, motion for return (debate).

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 79 — No Smoking Policy for the Legislative Building

Ms. Crofford: — At the end of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the serious hazards to health that smoking poses, the detrimental effect of second-hand smoke in the workplace, the increasing concern about environmental contamination and the government's stated position on the health hazards of smoking, adopt for implementation on January 1, 1995, a no smoking policy for the Legislative Assembly building; except that designated areas be provided for smoking within the Legislative Assembly building; and further that this policy extend to all personnel within the Legislative Assembly building, including MLAs and visitors.

This motion, I believe, has the support of my government colleagues, and as chair of the health, social policy and justice committee . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting, but I wonder if I couldn't revert to written questions, and by leave, table the answer to question 58.

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — Written question 58, the answer is tabled.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 79 — No Smoking Policy for the Legislative Building

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. Returning to my remarks, Mr. Speaker, as chair of the health, social policy and justice committee, there's many groups that have met with us who are concerned on this matter — the Cancer Society, the Lung Association, and Heart Health, which is coalition of about 20 health organizations — who have been hoping and urging

the government to take action on this life-threatening issue.

This is some of the information that they have presented to us. Not only is tobacco use branded as the chief single avoidable cause of premature death, disease, and disability in our time, but smoke from other people's cigarettes endangers the health of non-smokers. I think we've all had the experience of a large increase of people who have allergies towards cigarette smoke.

Tobacco smoke contains at least 50 cancer-causing compounds. Involuntary smoking is the third leading cause of lung cancer deaths. And the U.S. (United States) Surgeon General has stated that tobacco smoke is the single greatest workplace pollutant. It is a greater threat than all other industrial contaminants combined.

An average smoke-filled office contains concentrations of tobacco smoke and cancer-causing particulates which are 270 times higher than levels that are considered safe.

In a typical workplace situation where smoking is allowed, a non-smoker can inhale a level of nicotine and other toxic substances equivalent to two or three cigarettes every single working day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I admit it's a bit cheaper to smoke that way, it doesn't give you the same amount of control or choice over whether you actually smoke. And conventional ventilation systems that exist in our buildings are inadequate because of their relatively low air-exchange rates.

In a report of the U.S. general surgeon in 1990 some of the major conclusions highlighting the benefits of smoking cessation include that it has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages. Former smokers live longer than continuing smokers. I've been trying to convince my father of this for years but I haven't quite managed yet.

(1430)

For example, persons who quit smoking before age 50 have half the risk of dying in the next 15 years compared with continuing smokers. And smoking cessation also decreases the risk of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attack, stroke and chronic lung disease. And again I think how it affects this particular package of diseases suggests why so many organizations have joined in a coalition to try to reduce the amount of smoke in our environment.

In terms of other people who have smoking policies, a 1990 Health and Welfare Canada survey of Canada's school and school board smoking policies found that 97 per cent of schools have smoking policies and 58 per cent ban smoking entirely. In 1988, a hospital survey found that 90 per cent of hospitals have a formal, written smoking policy, 7 per cent have no formal policy but do restrict smoking, and only 3 per cent of hospitals had no policy.

Now I know people have raised concerns about enforcement in this area because are we going to institute smoking police or have fines and what not? And the answer is of course not; this is a positive policy intended to take leadership in the health area as a positive goal that we set for ourselves, not as a punitive measure. Both the City Hall and the university, for example, have these policies and largely people have complied out of goodwill rather than any punitive approach to the situation.

I think as employers MLAs have a responsibility to look after the employees in our workplace as we expect other employers to. And more importantly, as public figures we have a responsibility to set an example about smoking, to take leadership on the issue. It is the leading preventable cause of illness and death, and it produces more addicts, disability, and premature death than all illegal drugs combined.

Now where I have some difficulty with this is, over my life I have worked quite a bit in the field of drug addiction and in the area of alcohol addiction, and I do understand cigarette smoking to be an addiction. I don't think all people smoke because they enjoy the amount of money it costs them, or that they necessarily enjoy being chained to the cigarette. But it is an addiction.

If you look on a scale of addictive substances, if my memory serves me right, I believe that cigarettes topped the scale even above heroin as an addictive substance. It's the kind of substance that if we were to bring it in front of the federal drug board would never be approved as a legal substance for sale at this particular time in our society.

And unfortunately it's not only smokers who are affected but non-smokers as well. Second-hand smoke is the third leading cause of lung cancer deaths. So I think it's incumbent upon us as community leaders to have compassion for those who do smoke, but at the same time recognize that this is a problem that we have to deal with and have to move ahead on trying to reduce the level of smoke-contaminated air in our community.

Because it is such a problem for people, the new policy will include assistance for people who wish to stop smoking and employees will be eligible for a one-time reimbursement of 50 per cent of the cost of a quit smoking program to a maximum of \$100. And employees may claim the costs of a quit smoking program that they or their spouse has completed. This is in keeping with ways that this is handled in other areas. So while there be some short-term costs, it's expected to save taxpayers money in the long run in terms of improved health and improved air quality.

This may not have been as big of an issue when there was fewer pollutants in the air many years ago, but now that there is such a competition in our air space with the variety of pollutants that we have, everything we can do to reduce another pollutant is a positive act for all the people who suffer from allergies and are not

able to tolerate a smoke environment.

So as people realize the dangers and costs in both economic and health terms, it's become less acceptable in society. And I know it will be difficult and will take a great deal of determination, even on the part of our own workers in the building and our own members here in the caucus and in the legislature, but it's an effort that we are committing ourselves to, I hope today, to proceed in this direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw Palliser:

That this Assembly, in consideration of the serious hazards to health that smoking poses, the detrimental effect second-hand smoke has in the workplace, the increasing concern about environmental contamination and the government's stated position on the health hazards of smoking, adopt for implementation on January 1, 1995, a no smoking policy for the Legislative Assembly building; except that designated areas be provided for smoking within the Legislative Assembly building; and further, that this policy extend to all personnel within the Legislative Assembly building, including MLAs and visitors.

Seconded by the member for Moose Jaw Palliser.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I will have to ask the member, who is this seconded by?

Ms. Crofford: — The member for Moose Jaw Palliser.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And at the conclusion of my remarks, I would like to amend the motion that's been put forward by my colleague from Regina Lake Centre. An amendment that I would move at the conclusion of my remarks would state:

That the words "January 1, 1995" be deleted and the following be substituted therefor: "July 1, 1994";

And further that the words "except that designated areas be provided for smoking within the Legislative Assembly building" be deleted.

Mr. Speaker, I'm supporting the motion put forward and I think it's time that we've provided the leadership as members of government and our colleagues in the opposition benches to tell people about the severe dangers of second-hand smoke in all workplaces. And when we're going forward with a policy that will impact upon all government workers and all government workplaces, it's important for us to make that statement and then live by our word in looking at our workplaces as somewhere where we can — although in some instances it will be very difficult — provide the leadership to show others that we care about the workplace environment and the dangers of

second-hand smoke in that environment.

Earlier this year I was asked to be a part of a committee that drew together representatives from all government employees and from the department officials and sit there on behalf of government caucus and look at some of the ways that we could, as members of this building and of government, provide leadership in this area. And with that I wanted to make sure that this motion that is before us is consistent with the policy that's been developed by a very hard-working committee.

And in that way I'm putting forward the idea that to be consistent we would take out the words, January 1, and replace them with July 1 which will be consistent with the policy across government.

And in the second part of the amendment, that when we're talking about special designated areas in the workplace, we recognize that it takes much more than conventional ventilation systems to remove all of the particles from the air, or indeed to be able to consider our workplace a safe place if we don't have the proper ventilation systems.

And when you look at the building that we're located in today, it's a very difficult process to, number one, find an area that we can very easily ventilate, and the process of ventilation in a single room, to use the special equipment and the conditioning that's necessary, would, at the very least, cost about \$45,000.

We're not suggesting that we do that right across the government workplaces. I know in some areas it would be a cost of in excess of a hundred thousand dollars to provide a room that would meet the occupational health and safety standards. And because we're not going to ask for any dispensation or special handling of this issue for this workplace than we would suggest for all other workplaces of government employees, that I think it's very appropriate that we take out the specially designated area for this workplace as well and not proceed with that.

There has been much said about the dangers of second-hand smoke in the environment and I know as one person who suffers from allergies, I cannot choose an option to get up and leave my workplace if someone's sitting next to me and choosing to have a cigarette. I know that there are many other people in the same position.

Smoke knows no boundaries and really has no way to be properly contained if you have two of three people in a workplace who are choosing to smoke there and harm the third person. They do not have the ability to get up and leave because someone is being harmful to their health.

It's also a very difficult habit to quit I know, Mr. Speaker, and I sympathize for those people who have the habit and would be looking at, in this policy, sensation programs or to say that I know it's going to

be a very difficult way to provide leadership because there are times during your work day where you're going to have to remove yourself from the building to have a cigarette.

But we've asked that of all other people, and I know in the school systems, in the hospital systems, this is in place, so we're far from providing the leadership on this issue to our entire community. In this way, we're following far behind many other areas and workplaces such as city halls and municipal governments who have already done this for their workplace.

And I think some of the statistics have to be restated. Not only is tobacco use branded as the chief, single most avoidable cause of premature death, disease, and disability in our time, but smoke from other people's cigarettes endangers the health of non-smokers. We now have that as a proven fact, Mr. Speaker. And it does endanger the lives of others who are not willing participants in the process or are enjoying the smoking from someone else who is enjoying the . . . so-called enjoying the cigarette, although I know that there are many who say that they are going to now have to look at a change in their lifestyle to be able to adjust to this policy.

My daughter did a report at school and we looked at some of the agents that are present in a cigarette and in second-hand smoke, and it was interesting to see some of those are arsenic, road tar, formaldehyde. And as the member from Lake Centre said, we're adding that to many other pollutants that are already in the environment. But these we know are some of the cancer-causing agents that are found within the second-hand smoke.

Involuntary smoking is the third leading cause of lung cancer today. And I feel that anyone who is a non-smoker looks at that and has a fear of those statistics, because I think that as we know more and more about the effects of second-hand smoke, we're in as much danger from the health hazards as the person who's having the primary smoking problem.

The U.S. Surgeon General has stated that tobacco smoke is the single greatest workplace pollutant. It is a greater threat than all other industrial contaminants combined. So when you look at an average smoke-filled office, it contains concentrations of tobacco smoke and cancer-causing particulates which are 270 times higher than levels that are considered safe.

So in a typical workplace situation where smoking is allowed, a non-smoker can inhale a level of nicotine and other toxic substances equivalent to two or three cigarettes every single working day — not through their choice but being present in a workplace where there is no policy in place.

And I'd suggest that in this building many of the workers now are in a position where they know that occupational health and safety guidelines will be coming forward and they'll be wanting to lay formal

complaints against people who are smoking because of these statistics, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned, the conventional ventilation systems are totally inadequate if you're to say, we'll find us a room and put a bit of a fan in there and it'll take care of somehow the second-hand smoke. It's not the case.

I think the kind of fan system that you're talking about would probably suck the hair off of a head of an average member of the Assembly, and we don't want to see that happen. And I'm sure that the member from Moose Jaw Palliser doesn't want to lose any more for assisting a smoker to be able to ventilate a workplace in a room that would try and address to the ventilation system necessary.

It therefore leaves me, with the amendment that is before us, to state that I'm strongly supporting the motion that is before us. I would like to think that as a member of a health committee during my time on city council we played a strong role in developing a policy for that workplace. It took the leadership of a council of the day, and I know one or two people on that council who went to cessation programs and respected the policy that was put forward; that I think it will be incumbent upon all of us to try and live within the policy and provide the leadership for others.

(1445)

It's hard for some who are smokers and been smokers for a long time, but I think it's also hard on those who are now having to contend with the second-hand smoke and know what that does to their health. And I know that we're going to take a time to be able to adjust to the policy. So I'm encouraging everyone — all members on all sides of the House — to provide the leadership for not only this workplace, but for all government offices so that we can put forward a policy that will be respected by everyone.

I know the committee in doing their work felt that was very important and it was why a committee was drawn together of representatives from all workplaces and the employees to be able to do this in a cooperative spirit and a cooperative way. And the amendments that I'm going to put forward right now, Mr. Speaker, are consistent with the policy that's been developed in that cooperative manner.

Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to move the amendment that states:

That the words "January 1, 1995" be deleted and the following be substituted therefore: "July 1, 1994";

And further, that the words "except that designated areas be provided for smoking within the Legislative Assembly building" be deleted.

Seconded by the member from Saskatoon Wildwood. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of this House may or may not be familiar with my long-stated, almost quasi-militant position with respect to smoking. But I will, just for the record, repeat it again. I think it is extremely sad and unfortunate that some people have become addicted to a drug called nicotine. I think it is unfortunate. And I would hope that they can all stop smoking. And I have been working for several years to ensure that we can create the necessary public climate so that the drug addicts called cigarette, pipe, and cigar smokers, will feel that it is now time for them to stop smoking.

Having stated that, Mr. Speaker, I will say that initially when I reviewed the private members' motion put forward by the member from Regina Lake Centre, I was somewhat vexed and I was not at all certain that I even wanted to support it. Because I thought, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that it was a bit of a watered-down compromise. We have known for years and years that mainstream smoke and second-hand smoke are definitely deleterious to personal health.

We have known that there is no logical health reason for people to continue engaging in a dangerous addiction. And so I saw no reason for us to wait until January 1, 1995 to finally do the responsible thing and stop smoking in this Legislative Building.

Further, I saw no reason, given that this is a relatively old building by Saskatchewan architectural standards, I saw no reason for us to designate an area in the building to be set aside for our unfortunate drug addicts. It did seem to me that what we ought to be doing is moving forward boldly in 1994 and outright banning smoking in this building and doing it immediately.

So when the member from Regina Wascana Plains moved her amendment, I was very pleased to second it. Because it contains within it the essential elements of what I would like to see in a no smoking designation in the Legislative Assembly, and that is immediacy and totality.

Mr. Speaker, we have known for many, many years that smoking is deleterious to the health. Initially when it affected mostly men, I think that people tended to look at it and say, oh well, that's one of the prices you pay for being tough and macho and manly. So we'll just kind of ignore it and maybe eventually they'll see the light and they'll decide to quit smoking all on and of their own because they care about their loved ones.

Unfortunately that doesn't happen. While they may care about their loved ones, unfortunately it seems that the attraction towards the addiction that is inherent in inhaling nicotine seemed to be a little bit more important.

Now what we're seeing though, Mr. Speaker, as a

result of strong societal pressure, we are seeing that more and more men are coming to see the light. They are recognizing the dangerous health consequences of their addictive behaviour. And so we have seen the percentage of people smoking, and particularly of men smoking, decreasing rapidly over the last 10 to 15 years. For that, Mr. Speaker, I applaud them. It is wonderful to see the men showing that kind of leadership with respect to addictive behaviour.

I have to say though, as I look at recent trends, I am extremely saddened to realize that young women have become the target of the latest propaganda campaign by the nicotine manufacturers. And I think that we need to move much more aggressively to help young women understand that smoking is not a sexy thing, smoking is not a glamorous thing, smoking is not a wonderful thing. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it's dirty, it's filthy, it's dangerous. And it is time that all people, no matter what their age is, no matter what their sex is — all people butted out and stopped smoking tobacco products.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, because there are numerous studies that have indicated for several years the dangerous health consequences of smoking. And they are not simply cancers, though we tend when we talk about smoking to focus only on cancer of the lung. I would point out to members of the Assembly that other cancers that they are at risk of because they engage in smoking or because they are exposed to second-hand smoke because someone close to them smokes, other cancers are cancer of the bladder, cancer of the testicles, cancer of the kidneys, and cancer of the skin.

Now I don't think anyone in this Assembly would willingly want to gamble on the fact that they might, because of their addictive behaviour, get one of those particular cancers. Nor do I think people want to end up with heart disease or emphysema, also logical consequences of smoking behaviour.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, and I guess I'm rather strong on it because for almost 20 years I lived with a man who did smoke, and he smoked very heavily. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I myself smoked. I decided to quit smoking, so many years ago I can't even remember — I believe it was in 1978 or '79 that I quit smoking. My husband did not quit smoking and unfortunately three days ago would have been his 59th birthday, but because he decided to continue with his smoking behaviour, seven years ago he died of cancer of the kidneys.

It was a terrible consequence to have to pay for engaging in an addictive behaviour, and I would hope that people all around this province could look at that kind of an example and resolve, personally, to quit smoking themselves. It is not a pleasant thing to die of any kind of cancer and it is not pleasant for the people who loved that person to watch them dying of cancer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason that I wanted to speak to the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Wascana Plains is because I wanted to direct the Assembly's attention to the importance of this

being a broad-reaching smoking prohibition within the total building and it occurring as quickly as possible.

The reason for this, Mr. Speaker, is because since 1981 we have very clear evidence of the dangerous effects of second-hand smoke. Now smokers can go on and can talk about their rights to engage in risk behaviour all they want. Personally I take some issue with it but if adults decide that they want to engage in risky behaviour, I suppose I can't really stop them. But I have to say that their rights stop where my rights start, and it is very clear that second-hand smoke is dangerous to people in the immediate surroundings of a smoker.

In 1981, as a matter of fact January 17, 1981, there was a study published in the *British Medical Journal* entitled "Non-smoking wives of heavy smokers have a higher risk of lung cancer". That publication was put out by Dr. Hirayama of Japan and that publication basically galvanized the world into recognizing the dangerous effects of side-stream or second-hand smoke.

It was curious, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Hirayama did not even set out originally in his study to link the causal effects of second-hand smoke and cancer deaths. He was more interested in what was happening in the lives of smokers, and so he was asking them what kinds of diet did they have, did they eat carrots, did they take vitamins, all these kinds of questions, and then just asked coincidentally, and does your spouse smoke? And of course in Japanese society, at least at that time, there was very strong societal prohibition against women smoking.

So he asked this sort of off-the-cuff question and then was absolutely dumbfounded and amazed when he analysed his data and found that the non-smoking wives of Japanese smokers had a very high risk of lung cancer. Indeed their risk, as non-smokers, was as high as the very few smokers amongst Japanese women.

Every study since Dr. Hirayama's study, every reputable study, has confirmed the risk factor. It is important for us to recognize this as we contemplate the amendment put by the member from Regina Wascana Plains. It is not simply a question of smokers' rights. It is also a question of non-smokers' rights.

Indeed, smokers, curiously enough, because they are smoking a filtered cigarette generally, tend not to inhale as many poisons, as many toxins, as much carbon monoxide as people in their immediate surroundings who have to inhale the second-hand smoke that is not filtered so that the toxins are not filtered out for them.

Now not only do people who are in the area of smokers face a greater risk because of the second-hand smoke and the connection with lung cancer, they also face a greater risk with respect to asthmatic attacks. If a person has severe allergies, has asthma, and is in a confined area where he or she is compelled to breathe in second-hand smoke, he or she

is at far greater risk of having an asthma attack.

Now no matter how much a smoker may proclaim his or her rights to do something dangerous and silly and stupid on the grounds that he or she is addicted, surely no smoker is going to say: and I have the right to create conditions that could cause asthma attacks for people. Indeed people with heart disease, who have angina, can have a heart attack precipitated by being in an enclosed area where they are compelled to breathe a lot of second-hand smoke.

Luckily, we haven't had that happen in this Legislative Assembly building so far, Mr. Speaker, at least not so far as I'm aware. But it does seem to me, as publicly elected officials, it behoves us to show some responsibility and to recognize that the second-hand smoke that our MLAs or staff who are frequently here in this building are breathing out could potentially cause asthma attacks or angina attacks for some people, as well as giving them a greater exposure to the toxins that research has clearly identified can cause cancer in smokers and non-smokers.

(1500)

I'm going to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, by saying that even though it is popular these days to bad-mouth politicians and to suggest that politicians are the scum of the earth, we're the bottom feeders, we're even lower than any other occupational group that people may wish to mention, still it does seem to me we were elected for some good and compelling reasons, to maintain democracy in this province. And all of us, I think, on all sides of the House, whether we're New Democratic, Conservative, or Liberal, it seems to me all of us are worth something to this country; all of us have some sort of a useful function in this country and most particularly in this building.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it does not seem to me out of line that we would wish to protect the MLAs who work in this building as well as the staff who work here. On that grounds, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that it is not only important, it is timely; and it is long past . . . it is long overdue for us to move this motion, this amended motion, and prohibit smoking in the Legislative Building of the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on the amended motion put forward by the member for Regina Wascana Plains, recommending a no smoking policy in the Legislative Building.

We as legislators have many, many important issues to address. There are 81,000 people in this province on social assistance, 34,000 people looking for work, and 7,500 young men and women leaving universities and technical schools looking for hope and opportunity where they don't seem to find any. And one has to ask ourselves what we're doing today and how we're spending our time, debating whether

to make the Legislative Building a non-smoking facility.

I ask this question: what is to debate? As the current advertisement for sporting goods says: just do it.

In that context, Mr. Speaker, my comments will be very brief so we can get on with major issues of concern to all facing the province besides the concern for health and well-being.

I understand that this issue will be discussed in the near future by the Legislative Building space planning committee. And given the irrefutable evidence about the harmful effects of smoking and second-hand smoke, and given the fact that almost all public buildings have smoking bans in effect, their decision should not be one of great controversy.

I was going to caution when I first read the initial motion and now that the member from Wascana Plains has brought forward the amended motion, I guess this comment becomes rather redundant, so I'll simply support the amendment in saying that providing a ventilated smoking room at taxpayers' expense is not an expenditure that many would feel warranted, not only in these times of restraint but particularly given the seriousness of this issue.

In reply to an April 12 letter that I received from a doctor in Humboldt urging us to support a no smoking policy in this building, I replied indicating that our caucus will support any ban on smoking in this building, whether that be a complete ban or a partial ban.

I informed the writer, as I inform this House, that I am pleased to report that the offices of the Liberal caucus are completely smoke free and they have been since my arrival in 1991 anyway. This will continue to be the case regardless of the outcome of this motion and regardless of the decision of the Legislative Building space planning committee.

The comment of course from my illustrious member from Rosthern stating that that must have been a very tough decision in my caucus, I want you to know that there was a high, high level of intellectual debate. And the conclusion was unequivocal, Mr. Speaker, that there would be no smoking in the best interests of not only the caucus but the staff.

I am very pleased to support the amended motion put forward by the member from Wascana Plains. And I do think that it is more specific than the initial motion and therefore I shall return to my seat being pleased that we have discussed this issue today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this motion, particularly on a day when we were in the dark for a while. A lot of people would suggest that perhaps it's time to shed a little light on this subject.

Speaking of light on the subject, Mr. Speaker, while it was dark in here I can think of one useful purpose that

the people on the other side who smoke could have supplied us at that point in time. They could have all lit up their lighters and held them up in the air so we could have had a little more light in here. But unfortunately they didn't do so, Mr. Speaker.

And I say the members on the other side, Mr. Speaker, because no one in this caucus smokes.

So we have no problem at all supporting the motion being brought forward, especially that one amended by the member from Regina Wascana Plains. And we didn't have any difficulty in coming to a decision that, in our own area, that we would not smoke. Unlike the Liberal leader, who only had one caucus member to discuss it with, we have the 10 and we all agreed not to smoke, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, health concerns are the major issue when talking about smoking. It affects not only that person that is smoking but also those around them. Mr. Speaker, while I myself do not smoke, my wife does. And our children — our three children — are very concerned about that. They're always commenting to their mother about her smoking and doing little things to encourage her to stop. My wife knows my stand on her smoking also and we have come to the mutual agreement that we won't talk about it. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a concern for all those around the area that have smokers within their families and in their workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, there is one issue though with smoking that I think needs to be brought out. A person who smokes and causes themselves physical harm is a burden on our health system. And while it's a personal decision on their part to smoke, and also an environmental hazard to themselves, to their health, the government in its wisdom has decided that government funding will support that hazard or the rectification of that hazard through the health care system.

And yet we see other areas where the government is not providing that support. With cigarettes and tobacco in general, the government collects a very large amount of taxes and perhaps this is one of the reasons why governments are somewhat reluctant to discourage people from smoking; but in other areas the government also collects a large amount of taxes. With smoking and health care, the government will provide the rectification of the problems caused by smoking; but in situations such as the underground tanks, where the government collects a large amount of taxes from fuel, it's not prepared to support the rectification of that environmental concern.

And I believe there's a double standard at work here, Mr. Speaker. Smokers pay to pollute themselves. People with underground storage tanks, the government collects a large amount of tax on it and yet will not support the rectification of that environmental concern. And I think that's an issue that needs to be strongly looked at, Mr. Speaker, because in both cases — cigarettes and fuel — the government is collecting the majority of the monies

that are spent on it.

Just a day or so ago in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, as you walked through you could smell cigarette smoke. And if you looked around to see where that cigarette smoke was coming from, Mr. Speaker, it was coming from the government employees that were sitting behind the Assembly, waiting to come in for estimates. And while we're not allowed to smoke within this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, within this Chamber, in the rest of the building people do smoke. And it does create a problem and a concern for those who do not smoke and who are allergic to that smoke, Mr. Speaker.

So to eliminate smoking within this building would definitely be very beneficial. But I believe that the manner in which to handle the situation, while this Assembly can make a recommendation, the thing to do with it is to refer it to the Rules Committee for a decision to eliminate smoking in this area. And that cannot happen or is unlikely to happen, Mr. Speaker, today.

And because it's unlikely to happen today, that's why I found this news release, that I just received from the New Democratic caucus services, to be very intriguing. And perhaps because we had a time of darkness in this Assembly today, it's possible that I missed a vote. I don't believe I missed it, but as I read this news release from the government opposite, I'm concerned I must have missed something. Because the headline on this news release says: "Government MLAs vote for smoke-free Legislative Building."

Well unless I'm mistaken, Mr. Speaker, we haven't voted on this yet, and the government members haven't voted on it and the opposition members haven't voted on it. So this news release, Mr. Speaker, is very, very presumptuous.

An Hon. Member: — They have deemed that we voted it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well perhaps, as my colleague says, they're deeming it to have been done. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have not yet voted on this. And when the vote comes down I would suggest that perhaps it will not just be the government members that have voted for a smoke-free Legislative Building.

Now perhaps the government members are the only ones who want to take credit for this, but I'm sure that, Mr. Speaker, that if we review the *Hansards* afterwards, you will find that all members will have supported this. There's also one other part of this news release that I find very objectionable and I will read a paragraph of this, and I quote:

The new policy will also include assistance for employees wishing to stop smoking. Employees will be eligible for a one-time reimbursement of 50 per cent of the cost of a quit-smoking program to a maximum of \$100. Employees may claim for the cost of a quit-smoking program they or their spouse has

completed. (I'm assuming everybody only has one spouse.) Assistance for quit-smoking programs will be the responsibility of each government department affected.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it may be nice for the government employees within this building or throughout all of government to be able to receive funding to quit smoking, but what of the general public? The general public is expected to pay for this through their taxes but they're not going to be given the opportunity to access that. Just the government employees. And that's wrong, Mr. Speaker, totally wrong. The government employees that do stop smoking are going to receive their bonus for not having to pay 6 or \$7 a package for cigarettes. That's where they're going to make their saving.

This is an irresponsible use of government money, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers' money, to provide this kind of assistance for government employees. We're just passing estimates right now, Mr. Speaker, and it would be very interesting to see where in each department's budget they're allocating funds for stop smoking. Perhaps they're going to take it out of the NDP caucus funds, and if they wish to spend their money that way, that'll be appropriate for their decision, but I think it's absolutely wrong that it comes out of government funding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Wascana Plains amendment moved that this motion, this recommendation, take place on July 1, 1994. And perhaps the reason for that change, Mr. Speaker, is that once smokers are forced to quit smoking in this building — if it's January 1, it's going to be a tad cold to go outside and stand on the doorstep — this'll give them a break-in period I guess where they can stand outside for a little bit in the warm weather.

And this reminds me of a story I heard on the radio, Mr. Speaker, on the *Morningside* Show with Peter Gzowski. This happened a couple of years ago. Mr. Gzowski was interviewing a person from Germany who had been visiting Canada and had visited up at Yellowknife in the North West Territories. And this occurred during the winter months of the year.

And this person from Germany asked Mr. Gzowski why there were so many prostitutes in Yellowknife. And he described this large building where they seemed to be housed because they were all standing out in front of this building. And Mr. Gzowski stopped for a second and thought about it, and then he said, oh, those are federal employees; they can't smoke inside.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to be aware of the fact that we could end up with a large number of people standing outside of this building, smoking. And when it comes to the MLAs, Mr. Speaker, I think it's more important that they should be in this building working, rather than standing on the doorstep smoking.

(1515)

So I would encourage all of them to simply quit smoking and save the money that they're spending currently on cigarettes. It's up to us, Mr. Speaker, as MLAs, to set an example for the public. And this would be a good example to set, Mr. Speaker, to quit smoking.

I will be supporting this amendment, Mr. Speaker. But I found it surprising when the member from Saskatoon talked about gambling, that we shouldn't be gambling with our lives when it comes to smoking. And yet that very same member supports the government which is trying to encourage gambling in this province. Somewhat of a contradiction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will be supporting the elimination of smoking in this building. I would also encourage that the general public, that each and every one of us seriously consider smoking and the quitting, the stopping of smoking in general. Thank you.

Mr. Draper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. I'd like to get into this debate. I'd like to speak in favour of the motion that's moved by the member from Regina Lake Centre, but I'm opposed to the amendment from the member from Wascana Plains.

Smoking, when all is said and done, sir, is a legal addiction, and we in particular have not reduced our taxes on this particular sin, and I think that we should remember that. If we are happy to take the money off the people for smoking, we should allow them somewhere to smoke until it's made illegal. When it's made illegal, it's going to be a different matter altogether.

I'm a non-smoker myself, and I wish I could get my wife to stop smoking, but she won't, and that's that. And after 35 years I guess I'm just going to have to live with it. We're told that 500 people in Canada die from other people's smoke. Unfortunately many more than 500 a year die from other people's motor cars. So what are we going to do about that, Mr. Speaker, sir?

Eighty-five per cent of cases of lung cancer are from smoking, and the other 15 are in people who don't smoke. And this is because there are two kinds of lung cancer, Mr. Speaker, sir. There's the large cell variety and the small cell variety, and they're not related whatever. And those who smoke can get the one kind, and anybody can get the other kind, whether they smoke or whether they don't.

So simply banning smoking is not going to reduce the number of ... (inaudible) ... cell cancers in non-smokers because they're going to get them anyway. So I think we're not going to have too much effect on the reduction of the number of people who die from lung cancer, who do not smoke.

Nevertheless, second-hand smoke is certainly an annoyance and it is a hazard. And many people are allergic to tobacco smoke and the products and they should be protected. The same goes for cosmetics for that matter. I know a doctor in Regina who is a skin specialist and she insists, when she makes an

appointment for a patient, she says, please wear no make-up or perfume whatever, because this doctor is allergic to it.

So are we going to now ban perfumes and cosmetics because some people are allergic to that? Are we going to shave all our cats to prevent people developing allergies to cat hair? You know, we could go to ridiculous lengths here, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to get anywhere.

I must say that my own experience with the lack of accuracy of the Department of Health's statistics and claims makes me look with a very jaundiced eye on the figure of \$40,000 to convert a room into a smoking room. Frankly, I just don't believe it. For thousands of years, sir, we ventilated a room, believe it or not, simply by opening a window.

I think there are still windows in this House, sir, and there are still rooms where windows can be opened. And I know that in many hospitals there are window units where you simply put a small electric fan in the window and it will ventilate the air very adequately. I think we're getting an excuse from some puritans, some people who've got a one-track mind and they won't listen to any reasoning whatever.

I do know the problems of smoking at a personal level. My own father smoked himself to death at the age of 68. He didn't get cancer; he just coughed up his lungs, bit by bit, drop by drop. Most of it went onto the dressing table mirror in the bedroom each morning, much to my mother's annoyance, until virtually he had no lungs left. And if you looked at his chest X-ray, sir, it was almost as clear as a window. And it was no pleasure to sit by his bedside while he went purple in the face and literally asphyxiated because he couldn't get enough oxygen into him to keep him alive.

And 30 years ago when I was doing thoracic surgery in London, we used to spend a couple of hours cutting out a lung cancer. And it's a messy job is cutting out lung cancer, sir. They stick to everywhere and they spread to everything. It's not like taking out an appendix, which is quick and easy; you can do it in a few minutes.

And as soon as the operation was over, we'd all troop out of the operating room — the surgeons, the assistants, the anesthetists — and we're going to the changing room, and the first thing we'd do is say, we've got to have a cigarette. And if it didn't impress the people who actually cut out the lungs, now we're not going to impress the people who never have the horror of seeing that.

I think we have to be a little more moderate, a little less puritan. Why do we always say — and it's not just with smoking — I'm surprised it's not incised above every door, "thou shalt not." It reminds me of the mother's admonition from the kitchen when she's standing there washing the dishes and she yells over her shoulder, whatever you kids are doing, stop it this minute. She doesn't go to find out to see if it's suitable or not, just stop it. And we're being the same way here.

Personally I believe in moderation in all things, sir. Don't eat too much, don't drink too much, don't smoke too much, and I make sure I don't chase too many women. My wife and I have a slight argument as to how many is too many, but we have more or less resolved that for the moment.

And in Gravelbourg we are blessed with a born-again non-smoker at the hospital — a man who used to smoke 40 and 50 cigarettes a day, and all of a sudden he saw the light and now nobody can smoke anywhere in the damn town, if you ask me. And patients can be seen standing on the front doorsteps in their pyjamas and a housecoat in the depth of winter, with a drip in one hand and a catheter bag in the other, trying to smoke a cigarette. I mean, how stupid can we get. These people are going to get pneumonia or something, and they're going to be a lot worse off than if we gave them a little room in a corner where they wouldn't annoy anybody and they could go and smoke.

And somebody said this afternoon, you know, in some of these smoking rooms the air is so thick you can cut it with a knife. And smokers go in there and take one sniff and come out green around the gills. And if that's going to stop them smoking, let's do it.

And what happens with the nurses at the hospital? I often wonder — and I'm not going to give any secrets away — but is it possible that they sneak into the linen closet a couple at a time while a third one stands guard outside watching for the administrator or the nurse in charge, to tip them a wink so that they can stub their cigarette out somewhere where it's dangerous and they can cause a fire. You know we're really not doing ourselves any good with this, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, here we are thinking we're being very moral when in fact I think we are really making ourselves and everybody else very uncomfortable. Let us temper our zeal with a little humanity, sir, defeat this amendment, and pass the substantive motion; but please, please, please don't make martyrs out of the smokers. It's not going to do us any good.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hadn't originally planned to get into the debate on this issue, however I felt it imperative that a few other members take a moment to give second reflection to the motion before us.

As far as smoking in this Assembly, I can honestly stand before you, as I was just approached in the hall by the media whether or not I smoked, and certainly I don't, and smoking offends me sometimes. In fact sometimes, physically it gives me a major problem if I end up in a room where people are actively smoking. And it can create some problems as far as some sinus problems that I may run into, Mr. Speaker.

And the fact that we're trying to work or educate the public to discontinue smoking, and I was more than disturbed when I saw the papers and saw on the news the other night about the number of young people that are now taking up the habit. And it would seem that we've got, amongst young ladies especially, there's a growing number of young women taking up the habit of smoking, Mr. Speaker. And I think that appals us most, when generally speaking the public in general are quite well aware of the problems associated with smoking.

And there has been . . . a lot has transpired. There's been educational programs; individuals who have been smokers themselves who have stood up and strongly spoke out against the habit that they once took part or participated in. And one has to wonder why individuals, young people in general, would continue to pick up a habit which is no good for their health — which isn't any good for their health nor is it good for the health of people around them.

So I would support the motion on the basis that we speak out and we work towards creating a healthier environment in this Legislative Assembly and in all public buildings across the province of Saskatchewan by creating a smoke-free environment.

I will, Mr. Speaker, however qualify that by suggesting I do not believe the government or anyone in general should be paying to help somebody else quit the habit. And I suggest that for the government to suggest that they would be willing to put up to a hundred dollars per person towards a program to help them combat their addiction to tobacco, is ludicrous.

Why should public employees, who are the best paid employees in the province of Saskatchewan, now receive another benefit? Now if the government members and the government itself and its own caucus want to set up, design a program and take their own caucus funds and put it towards a program to help combat the problems of addiction to nicotine, then I would give them the go-ahead. And they're more than welcome to do that.

But to take taxpayers' money — my dollar and the dollars of people right across this province — and to give it to individuals to quit a habit which they know is wrong, and to give it to them when the government on one hand says that we don't have the money . . . The minister just told us today that when it comes to providing French language education that no, that's fine. And of course he indicated, as I indicated as well, that it's mostly federal money. But whether it's federal money or provincial money, it's all taxpayers' money; we're all taxpayers and we pay Saskatchewan taxes, we pay federal taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think this government has talked so much about debt reduction and deficit reduction, one has to wonder why, on one hand, we have the need for such stringent restrictions on the debt and deficit reduction. We're pulling money out of health care, we're pulling money out of health services, we're pulling money out of educational services, but

all of a sudden maybe we should put some money into a program to help public sector employees kick the habit of smoking.

Well what about all the other residents of the province of Saskatchewan? And I would suppose that the government would argue, well if we can get people to get off of tobacco products, then it's going to create a healthier environment for us. True. It's going to become a cost saving to the Health department. No doubt there would be a substantial cost saving because of the health problems associated with smoking.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, in general it's fine for us to stand here and indicate that it would be appropriate that we speak out on the issue of smoking and we try to encourage the young people across this nation, and encourage them by us, as adults, taking and setting the initiative and setting the example. And maybe many of the members of this Legislative Assembly maybe need to take the bull by the horns and set the example for the young people out there by just discontinuing that habit on their own without the aid of a publicly funded program.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to close by saying I would encourage anyone if they need some help to seek some help. I think there are a lot of options. There are a lot of groups and individuals out there who would like to be more than willing to work with people in helping them to overcome this habit. I think we must continue the educational process, but I am opposed to any funding that would come out of the taxpayers, specifically when it's directly related just to a certain sector of employees in the province . . . and smokers in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to make a few remarks on this motion. Perhaps my first remark would be in answer to a comment made by the member from Souris-Cannington, who asked the government members if they would illuminate the legislature here with some lighters. And I say to the member from Souris-Cannington, in order to keep the members opposite from being in the dark, we would oblige him at any time to shed some light on the situation — not only in this legislature physically, but particularly politically, Mr. Speaker. And it would help them perhaps in seeing things a little clearer.

(1530)

My second comment, Mr. Speaker, is in response to comments just made by the member from Moosomin who has indicated that he supports this particular motion, and I'm glad to see that. But he also objects to the government at any time putting any money forward to help people kick the habit. In doing so he says that the government should not be paying for something that's self-inflicted.

And in doing so, I would wonder if the member would take it just one step further and consider the obvious contradiction to his comment. Because if he's talking

about cost, there is definitely a cost two ways to society from people who smoke. First of course is the health costs, and that doesn't matter whether you're working for government or for anybody else, there's a health cost to the government and to the people of Saskatchewan because of the amount of smoking.

And secondly is the amount of time that is used up by smokers and the decrease in efficiency lost to smoking time. This is often evidenced when you're watching people who have quit smoking or if you hear testimony from people who have been smokers and then quit smoking and suddenly you find that they tell you that they are able to do work in a much more efficient fashion and they are not constantly thinking of when they are going to have to go out and have that cigarette.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that we are dealing with has been amended. Originally the concept of this motion was to ban smoking in the legislature effective January 1 and to have designated smoking areas. This was based on the concept that perhaps we should be doing it in a realistic fashion knowing that the minute smoking is banned in this legislature, that not everybody is automatically going to become a non-smoker. We all know that. I mean we have plenty of experience knowing that you can make any kind of rules in a home or a public place or in a workplace, but if there's somebody that definitely wants to smoke, they will find a way of smoking.

So the whole concept was to designate a smoking area. There is a problem with that, Mr. Speaker, and that is the cost associated with the banning, and that is the cost associated with the ventilation of a designated space. Because currently, by law, if we are to designate spaces for smoking it would imply that there would be a cost and it could go up to 30,000. I suppose some rooms may be ventilated for costs less than that. But in view of the restraint measures, we are going to be taking this measure instead.

Mr. Speaker, the members, as we get into this vote, the vote will likely go through and it'll be passed because the majority of people are for the motion. But that is not going to make it something that's going to be easy to live with for those who are smokers or for those who will feel that this is imposed on them. And we're going to have to work out some kind of systems in this building to live alongside those people.

Now there may be some that what you could tell them is look, just kick them out, let them go outside — force them to do so. That's easy to say and it's easy to give somebody else the authority to do it. But it's a little more difficult when you've got somebody that you've worked with for years and years, worked in the same office, have developed a tremendous working relationship with over the years, and all of a sudden you are left in the position to kick this particular person out.

Mr. Speaker, society doesn't work that way. It's taken years for all of society and all of Canada and all of North America and the world to adopt the smoking

habit, and it's going to take years for this habit to be done away with. And it's got to be done slowly.

Each one of us won't quit smoking until we make that personal decision to quit smoking. Perhaps with some coaxing and with some goodwill we hope that the members of the legislature and the people who work in this building will take it upon themselves to find a smoking area. In the summertime it will be easy — outside the building. Perhaps sometime during the winter or in other months, I would hope that we find a way of dealing with this right amongst ourselves and specifying an area, not a legally designated area, but specifying an area where those people who are addicted and feel that they have to go and have that cigarette will feel comfortable going.

I will still be voting for the amendment, Mr. Speaker, and for the motion, because I think not to pass the amendment or to pass the motion would give us more difficulty financially. And I just don't think we want to set up a series of ventilated rooms at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars in the legislature if we're not prepared to do it in other public buildings, and I don't think we can afford to do it in other public buildings.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we are going to ask those who are smokers to resolve to try to limit their smoking and restrict their smoking, we will also at the same time have to ask those who are non-smokers to be tolerant and to help out and to be positive any time somebody says that they're going to try to quit smoking. And a motion like this will help, will help some people who perhaps need just that one more thing to help them quit smoking.

I think almost every one of us as a youngster or at some stage had some experience with cigarettes. I'm one of those people that was fortunate in that my tolerance for tobacco is fairly great — I can tolerate a lot of cigarettes and smoke — and I can also get along without it. Now most people are not quite that fortunate. But when I think about my own smoking history, it's easy to understand and project it to anybody else and understand what the difficulties are. Because as a youngster, of course my parents told me that I shouldn't smoke. First of all they told me it was a bad habit; secondly, they told me it was very expensive; and thirdly, I guess my dad told me that if I ever started smoking he'd probably whale the tar out of me.

So it wasn't till I was 14 years old, Mr. Speaker, on a train on the way to Comox, B.C. as a young navy cadet that I had my first opportunity to try that weed. And it made me feel like a big guy. And I guess that's . . . it was sort of like a passing into adolescence. And that is . . . we recognize that that's one of the biggest motivators of young women and young men smoking today. It's sort of their several rights of passage that we have in our society. It's a cultural thing, Mr. Speaker.

It wasn't because I was addicted or because I felt that I had to have that cigarette — heaven's no; the thing didn't even taste good; made me cough and sputter — it was because of the cultural pressure. And it was that

sort of age of transition; perhaps a little bit of rebellion that every youngster goes through, and every parent who's got a youngster knows it. They watch their youngsters go through that.

See, there were other contradictory examples, because in my youth when you went to a movie the models of the day, the model actors always were shown with a cigarette in their fingers; the people that had made it, they had cigarettes. The television advertising, the early television advertising in those days also always had showed cigarettes, and it was associated with glamour. Cigarettes were used as a method of promoting sports events, are still used as a method of promoting sports events.

Now things are slowly starting to change around. And people in society . . . and some people eventually decided we need to make that change, have taken several steps to start to move around in a different direction on this.

See, Mr. Speaker, as a youngster I can remember also my grandfather who smoked a pipe and who was much of a model to me. He lived till he was 100 years old. So if anybody would tell me that smoking was going to be hard on your health, all I had to do was point to my grandfather who was the model of health and the argument ended there. And a person . . . As an individual, I felt invincible as a youngster.

But I'll tell you how I quit smoking, Mr. Speaker. There was a time in my early teaching career when I was teaching in the small town of Quill Lake, Saskatchewan, and I think there were about eight or nine teachers in the staff. And we had a thing called a recess in those days.

So what would happen is after being in the classroom, cooped up for an hour and a half, you went into the staff room for a little break. And it got so that the minute you got into the staff room, everybody pulled out a package of cigarettes, and if you didn't have one you certainly got one from your neighbour.

And the staff room, I think, was about 8 feet wide and maybe 12 feet long, and we were lined up four along one wall and four along the other wall. And it took about four or five minutes for the air in that staff room to turn perfectly blue. So by the time I walked out of the staff room and back to my classroom, my mind was completely fogged, and you realize the total inability to function properly in the classroom.

And at some stage, at some time or other, something hit me all of a sudden and said: hey, who's in control — you or the cigarette? And I made a personal decision.

And from then on I still enjoy the occasional cigarette for social purposes — maybe once a month, maybe less than that — but I'm one of the fortunate ones, Mr. Speaker. Some people are not that lucky; they are not able to get along without a cigarette and just quit cold turkey.

Mr. Speaker, I can recall as a student at university working on . . . we were assigned essays and I did one . . . one of the things that I studied was the study on prenatal effects of drugs and tobacco usage, did a survey of literature. And even at that time, the literature at that time pointed very directly that women who smoked or used drugs of any kind had a much higher incidence of children with deformities or children who ended up with some kind of physical problems after.

That impressed me very much, Mr. Speaker, and that still happens to this day. And when I see now in our schools how many youngsters there are that are either hyperactive or have learning problems or have problems which we hadn't identified, I ask myself the question: how much of this is due to either the men or the women who conceived these children? How much of it is due to substance abuse that they may have taken themselves?

So I think it's incumbent upon us here in the legislature, to . . . it's incumbent upon us in the legislature here to get on with this and show the example. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking every member to vote for the amendment, to vote for the motion. Let's get on with it. Let's show the example, and once we do it ourselves here in the legislature we will be able to then carry on and do it further, adding to this right throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

(1545)

Resolution No. 80 — Health District Board Elections

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a matter I believe of major concern to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, and I want to identify it by reading into the record a motion that I will making at the end of my remarks, and that is this:

That this Assembly demand the government take the advice of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, the general public of our province and other organizations to hold health district board elections this fall in conjunction with the municipal elections and in doing so, save 500,000 in additional elections costs, 200,000 from the Provincial Health Council, approximately 200,000 allocated for an independent study of health board elections and instead use this money toward funding health care services.

And at the conclusion of my remarks, I will be moving that motion.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is time that the Government of Saskatchewan listen to the people of Saskatchewan and that's why I brought this motion forward today. People in this province have been saying to us, have been saying to us over and over again, it's time to hold an election for these health boards that would significantly give an input into the local control of the health districts.

And I want to raise some points that I believe are very, very significant in relation to this. In dealing with bringing this to a point where the public confidence needs to be re-established in these health boards, I think would happen if they had an election. I see this happening over and over again in various parts of the community that I live in and also in the communities surrounding my constituency.

In dealing with this I want to point out a number of areas that are our concern. The community of Ponteix, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had to initiate a special resolution from the hospital board there in order to protect some of the funds that they had established through their years of service in providing to the people of that community access to funds that were supplied by various agencies, groups, and taxpayers. This money was put into a fund that supported the Ponteix Union Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, what happened there also was that when the health boards were told that they had to . . . or the people in the province were told that they had to establish health boards, the people then said, what of these funds can we protect? And, Mr. Speaker, it was a matter of very, very serious concern that certain portions of this money they got to keep but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they had to give up to the health district boards thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

That didn't only happen in the community of Ponteix, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that happened in the community of Mankota; that happened in the community of Vanguard; that happened in the community of Hodgeville; that happened in the community of Morse; that happened in the community of Herbert; that happened in the community of Cabri; in Gull Lake — all of those areas, Mr. Speaker. The people in the communities had raised money through various methods, and they had to supply that money back to the health district boards. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a fact.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if the people would have gone to the community of Ponteix they would have found out that the community got to keep about \$100,000 and the people in that health district board had to give back to the health district . . . or the union hospital district had to give to the health district board \$250,000. They did, Mr. Speaker. And if they'd go back to those communities they'd find that out. Every one of those communities I mentioned gave a significant amount of money back to the health district board.

Some of that money was collected in taxes, some of

that money was collected in bequests, some of that money was donated. And, Mr. Speaker, the money that these people collected in taxes had to be given back to the health district board. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a fact. And if any one of the government members want to dispute that, then they should go back to those health district boards and tell them that they have the right to have all of that money designated back to that community for health care services that they would say were at their discretion.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what happened. And I see over there that people are saying, no, it isn't, no, it isn't. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they just need to go back to those communities and find out what's really going on.

Now I want to point some other things out to them. These health district boards are now building buildings, they're adding to their executive boardrooms, chairs, tables, not in thousands of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in tens of thousands of dollars they're adding to the cost of health care in those communities.

In the community that I live in, in the health district that I live in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Swift Current Health District, there is significant a volume of dollars used in renovating the nurses' residence. There is significant volumes of dollars used in providing tables, and I have heard as high as \$15,000 to put a table in that health district boardroom. Chairs in the neighbourhood of 10 to . . . 1,000 to \$1,500 a chair, for each one of the board members — 12 board members, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister, and associate minister, and executive members of this government, the people of the province of Saskatchewan want to have the right and an opportunity to deliver their verdict on that kind of wellness, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they don't believe in it and the people in the province need to have that opportunity.

And that is the reason why we are saying to you, as executive members of this government, it's time to go out and listen to the people. The people in urban Saskatchewan, the people in rural Saskatchewan want to have a voice in how these boards are going to be elected.

Mr. Speaker, in the last edition of the Swift Current *Sun* there was a bid opportunity to build the office building, establish a location for the Rolling Hills Health District Board. Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in those communities, when there are restrictions placed on funding in various ways, shapes, and forms by this government, and then you see a helter-skelter spending by individuals in each of these communities, people are saying it doesn't wash. We want an opportunity to elect these people so that they have accountability and responsibility for what they're doing. And that, Mr. Speaker, is not happening — that is not happening.

And I'm going to go one step further. That is also not

happening as it relates to accountability. The health care districts are going to be audited, 6 of the 30 are going to be audited by the Provincial Auditor. And Mr. Speaker, who are the others going to be audited by? Independent auditors who are going to provide an audit function to those people that is not in the same standard that is going to be delivered by the Provincial Auditor. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a fact.

That is a concern, not only to this member of this Assembly but is also a concern to the auditor, and he has said that in Public Accounts Committee meetings and he will probably have reason to say that again after the next audit that he does.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the reason why we say to this government that it's time to take a serious look at elections for health care boards. We aren't the only ones that are saying it. SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) is saying the same thing; SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) is saying exactly the same thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker — rural municipalities, urban municipalities. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is also saying that very same thing — call an election, call an election for health district boards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, allow the people to have a voice in determining who's going to run those boards. And I've heard this over and over again from members opposite when we've asked the questions: well, we can't do it now because they aren't organized, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

SARM had a very interesting observation coming from Sinclair Harrison, their president: Elected health district boards were promised to the people of this province when health reforms began nearly two years ago. The provincial government promised local authority and accountability in health care service.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for the provincial government to live up to those commitments and keep its promise. And that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason why we are raising this and we believe that it is an important function of the kinds of things that we need to do in this Assembly.

The annual conventions of SARM and SUMA, the delegates passed resolutions demanding that elections be held this year. Both associations have repeatedly asked the minister to announce that elections will be held in October with other local government elections. And to date, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their requests have been ignored.

And what did this government do to counteract that? Oh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to have a study. We're going to have a study to see where we put the divisions in the wards of the health districts; and we have to do an investigation.

And who did they get to do this investigation, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well a long-time NDP supporter, Mr. Garf Stevenson, a one-man commission to

investigate whether the elections will be held this fall. They know they're not going to be held this fall because they haven't got the courage to see those people that they appointed defeated in the polls. That's what they haven't got the courage for.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what the argument is going to be next year? I can see it happening. I can see it happening by these members opposite. They're going to say, oh we're going to not hold elections in 1995. Why? Why? Because it costs too much, Mr. Speaker. It costs too much. So then we'll hold them in the next series of municipal elections. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what these people are likely going to come to us with — oh it's going to cost too much. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what's going to happen next year.

What's interesting to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that when the government gets back into a corner they'll set up a kind of a one-man commission to investigate an area of concern that the people have brought up, and then he will make a commitment to put in on paper some of the ideas that they had anyway. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what I expect from Mr. Garf Stevenson in the next report that he's going to give out about awards and the responsibility of holding elections.

This, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will say to the people in this Assembly also, that this commission was probably set up when we began to pressure this Assembly and the government executive members about whether they should hold elections. And then they said, okay, we'll put up a commission and we'll defer the decision. And that's exactly the reason why they're having Mr. Stevenson do that today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they don't have any idea about what the people are talking about. People want to have an election and so the questions that are being asked by those people are such like this: why doesn't the government want democratically elected people to hold positions on district health boards? Why do the government not want to have those people elected? Why does the Minister of Health think her appointed NDP friends can do a better job than elected people?

Are elections being held off so that the government won't be criticized by the health boards? Now there's an interesting question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will they be held off because they don't want criticism coming from the health boards?

(1600)

Yesterday we find out that there's a thousand more people added to the cost of the health district boards. A thousand more people are going to be delivering services through the health district boards. And that, Mr. Speaker, we just discovered yesterday. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why these people need to be allowed to seek election in the province of Saskatchewan in their own local communities and deliver the opportunity to be accountable and deliver the health care system in a way that is legitimate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the decisions being made by these health boards will change the delivery of health care in this province for ever. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The people opposite will not trust that to elected officials. They don't believe that the people there who aren't appointed by them have any imagination, creativity on how to manage health care boards.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would gather that there are some that weren't even born in 1946, sitting on that other side that could have been around when the first health region in the province was put together by the people of Swift Current. And that, Mr. Speaker, is where health care really began; it began in earnest.

And how did it begin, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It became by having elected officials be part of a group of people to sit and debate whether the health care should be doing A, whether it should be B or C, or any of the above. And they were, Mr. Deputy Speaker, elected individuals from the people in that community.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the decisions being made by individuals in health districts should be elected; they should have an accountability process to the people in that community. And I believe that they need to have that done, and the sooner the better.

Mr. Speaker, the appointed members of those boards will only carry out the will of the government. That's why they're appointed — to carry out the will of the government. And, Mr. Speaker, the people have no faith in this government. That's what they need to be told, and that's what we're telling them today.

If health board elections were integrated this fall into the election process, the cost would be minimal. In fact, in order to put it on the ballot in Regina, Mr. Speaker, we were told by SUMA people that it would cost \$2,000 to put it on the ballot. That's what it would cost.

And what will it cost to put that ballot together in a new election next year or the next year or the next year when it's independent of the municipal elections? Hundreds of thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker — hundreds of thousands of dollars, when it could have been done at the same time the other municipal elections are taking place.

If elections were held on their own in a year or so, it will cost the people of the province thousands and thousands of dollars. SUMA has stated that, and I believe that they are accurate in their assessment because of the cost of just doing the work and getting the election process started.

If the health boards are not added to the ballot this fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, expect the costs to be high for the first time that they call that election. The people in the province have estimated \$500,000 to hold that election; \$200,000 to pay for Mr. Stevenson; \$200,000 to pay for this health council that they're sending across this province.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the estimate that is put together not by us; that estimate was put together by SUMA and SARM. And if you wanted to say that they're political in what they're doing, then you go ahead and do that. They are, I believe, of every political stripe, realizing that there is an opportunity to save money. And to save money they will, and they are required to do that because they're far closer to the people than you are, and that's the reason why we're encouraging them to do it.

Mr. Speaker, we have been told over and over again that this whole exercise of wellness was there to save money. To save money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to point out to the public that there is 10 million more in the budget this year for those same wellness model programs that they've got out there; money that has to be spent because people get sick and you have to pay for it.

And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that next year there's going to be another \$10 million put into there because the people in the province of Saskatchewan are going to demand health care services. And that is legitimate. The people in this province believe that they deserve it. They've earned it. They've paid for it, and they expect to get it. We on this side of the House believe that the people in the province should be given an opportunity to vote.

There's a letter from Edgeley that is in the *Leader-Post*. The heading:

Health boards: time to vote. The decision by the Health minister to postpone elections for district health boards is outrageous.

This woman writing in is Christine Whitaker.

One of the reasons for my resignation from the Pipestone District Health Board was what I perceived to be an inappropriate use of health funds at both district and provincial levels. My position continues to be vindicated.

From Edgeley in the Pipestone Health District.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people all over are saying the same things. In the community that I . . . in the health district board that I live in, the whole board resigned, Mr. Speaker, because of political influence by this minister on the way that the opportunities were going to be allowed to be handled by that hospital or health care district.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those people resigned because of political influence and they . . . all of them resigned. Not one of them stayed in as a part of that opportunity.

Another, from the *Star-Phoenix*, April 15:

Wrong head picked for study.

How sad! Not only do we have a health board that is demolishing our system, we now have an appointed retired gentleman receiving a

pension that exceeds the combined income of five families with children who has been offered (\$500,000) . . . a day of taxpayers' money to do a study.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important that we tell the people of the province of Saskatchewan that this is important. In order . . .

Would you call this "job creation", "fiscal restraint", or a platform for privatization?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this letter goes on:

In order to do an unbiased study of the health board election issue, we have intellectual graduates from our universities (some with master's and honors degrees) that are struggling to find employment. It would make more sense to hire graduates from three different colleges (your choice) and pay each \$100 a day. The result could be rewarding and take less time.

An important factor: you would be showing compassion towards our "leaders" of tomorrow.

To err is human, to make an adjustment would be the right thing to do.

Coming from Saskatoon. And that is a letter that was written to the *Star-Phoenix*.

The *Star-Phoenix*, March 16:

On Dec. 17, the Saskatoon District Health Board announced its latest realignment of services for Saskatoon's three hospitals.

And there they go through and talk about the role that the health board is. And the conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in the headline: "Time to elect health board".

And there's another letter from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. Over and over again the people of Saskatchewan are saying: it's time to elect, it's time to elect.

"Some free advice: hold board elections this fall". The *Leader-Post*, April 12. And I quote:

Health Minister Louise Simard's decision to spend \$200,000 on determining when and how district health boards should be elected is a waste of time and money.

Rather, Simard could have simply listened to the *free* advice being offered by such grassroots organizations as (SUMA, SARM). They have repeatedly said that elections should be held this fall . . .

The editorial from the Regina *Leader-Post*, asking the people of this executive branch of government, the Minister of Health, the Associate Minister of Health, to

say okay, we will call an election; we will have an election; go set your platforms out; run on it on that basis.

The *Star-Phoenix*, April 13. The title is: why the stalling?

It would be interesting to know why the Government of Saskatchewan is going to such pains to stall on the election of members of district health boards. Both urban and rural municipal associations want the elections held this fall. That is a logical and common-sense position for the very obvious reason that this is a municipal election year.

Now they go on to talk about why they think the minister is stalling. That's a headline, *Star-Phoenix*.

Another one, *The Village Press* in Rosthern. Elections should precede decisions, Mr. Speaker. Let the people decide what they want to have for a platform. Let the people decide what platform they want to accept. Let the people decide.

The *Leader-Post*, February 26, "Delay in electing health boards not acceptable." It goes on and on, over and over again as we talk about these issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People in this province want to have a say in how the health care reform should continue. They want a say. They want to know what's going on; they want a say in what's going on.

If the people in government today would go out into those communities and find out what it is they were saying, what the people were saying, they would find out that SARM and SUMA are responding to their own people. They're responding to their electorate. They're responding to the people in their communities in a way that is honourable.

Our office has been receiving letters from health boards that want to disassociate themselves also from SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), and those people want to discontinue their association. Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why do they want to disassociate themselves from that organization?

Well, Mr. Speaker, that association is made up of health district board managers, chief executive officers, and board members. Now they said they came out — and the government has said this to us often — they said, we don't want to hold elections this year because we don't think that people are aware enough of the situation so that they can make a rational decision on it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when they see and hear stories about how these health boards are spending money on self-gratification, dealing with what I believe are public funds, they need to be held accountable. The people in my community are going to be saying to someone in the future: will you support me? And they will say: no I won't because of A, B, and C, and they will throw the whole works out.

My best guess is, Mr. Speaker, and I've been in politics a long time, both in municipal politics and in provincial politics, that 80 per cent of the people who are appointed to those boards will not get re-elected. And they know that, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because they don't have the voice of the people themselves. They don't understand what it is and they don't understand the issues.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we on this side have raised this motion. And I believe it is timely and is of significance. And that's why I, seconded by the member from Moosomin, believe that this is an important motion:

That this Assembly demand the government take the advice of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, the general public of our province and other organizations to hold health district board elections this fall in conjunction with the municipal elections, and in doing so save \$500,000 in additional election costs, \$200,000 from the Provincial Health Council, approximately \$200,000 allocated for an independent study of health board elections and instead use this money toward funding health care services.

I so move, seconded by the member from Moosomin.

(1615)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just have a few comments that I would like to make in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Morse.

Certainly the debate over health board elections is something that we have been hearing for quite a while. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question of whether or not health boards should be elected goes even further back than the recent regional boards that have been created.

It's been a question that has been brought to my attention on numerous occasions in my constituency, where individuals felt that rather than local governments appointing members to represent them on the different boards in the area — be it health boards; be it hospital or care home or ambulance board — it would be appropriate to elect members to these boards so that the electorate themselves, the local electorate and taxpayer, property owner, would have an ability to feel that they had some input and involvement in the funding of their local hospital and their care home and ambulance board. So as I've indicated, the issue of health board elections is not new to the Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP government was informed several months ago that, if health board elections were not held this fall in conjunction with municipal elections, that it would cost taxpayers more

than an additional \$500,000. And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in light of the debt problems that we're talking about in this province and the deficit — and not just the province of Saskatchewan but all the provinces of Canada and certainly the federal government — \$500,000 may not sound like a lot of money, but the reality is that \$500,000 here and \$100,000 there and \$1 million over here and it doesn't take long before there is a substantial shortfall. In fact a shortfall that far outweighs and exceeds the revenue that is being generated. So it is something that we must take note of.

Certainly this is not a number that was picked out of the sky, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the estimate provided by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, \$500,000 or half a million dollars, to be exact. And that kind of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could keep many rural hospitals in the province of Saskatchewan open for another year.

But it seems this money would rather be thrown away by this government, rather than be put into effective care and providing services to the health users and the taxpayers of this province. Thrown away to protect their hand-picked board members.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government would argue no, that we asked for submissions. The reality is the government made the appointments at the end of the day; whether or not they asked for submissions or received submissions, the appointments were all made by the Department of Health and by the government through Executive Council.

Add that half million to the \$200,000 being spent on Mr. Stevenson's study, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have now in front of us is almost three-quarters of a million dollars that is being . . . that is going to be lost or wasted or not taken advantage of. Three-quarters of a million dollars that is just another addition to the deficit and to the budget of this province, to the health budget, which isn't necessary and it doesn't do one thing for the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan.

It doesn't provide one more bed in a hospital. It doesn't provide even a day less on the waiting-list for elective surgery. Mr. Speaker, it does nothing other than put more money into an area where the government tries to promote its own objectives.

As SARM president Sinclair Harrison put it, and I quote, local people are quite capable of determining ward boundaries by themselves. And his quote came out after the government appointed Mr. Stevenson to look into ways of setting up wards or designing wards in our local health districts.

And I quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agree with Mr. Harrison that most local boards or local health or regional health districts, the boards and even the local governments involved in those areas would find very simple and very economical ways of deciding how the board members should be elected, how they should represent the different areas of that district so

that the district is well represented and there is representation from across the district. I don't think . . . we don't need to be handing Mr. Stevenson money for anything. It certainly is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

So we tack on the additional 200,000 for a provincial health council to travel around the province to listen to people. And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the different costs that are associated with this health council, with Mr. Stevenson's commission, and with the \$500,000 cost that is going to be incurred because the government will not have this election this fall, it's no wonder that people, even though they may not be protesting loudly out in front of this Legislative Assembly, in general, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what you find, people are becoming very disgruntled and dissatisfied with what the NDP government of the day has done for health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

The government continues to talk of how they must save money and how they must spend their money more efficiently and a lot more wisely, and yet every time we turn around they find ways and means of squandering the money rather than providing services and covering the debt or trying to reduce the deficit of the province of Saskatchewan.

As I indicated earlier, where will this money go? Will this money go into respite beds? The other day in the House, a question was brought forward by my colleague, the member from Rosthern, that came in from one of the people of this province asking the Premier when he was going to look at providing more care home beds in the province of Saskatchewan, or provide some additional funding for low income housing to meet the needs of our seniors across this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask the question that must be asked — what needs to be studied? What is so complicated about splitting areas up for elections? One would think the NDP government would have taken care of that long ago when they forced many areas into districts in the first place. And I think that at the time the government should have been looking at this process. And if that's what they wanted to do, they should have basically had that process of wards already set up when they asked the districts to form these local districts.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the government had no forethought, no plan, and that's why we find ourselves in this predicament today. In fact they had no intention of holding early board elections. Most of the health district boards don't even have their books in place, and there is good reason for this. That is because the Health minister wouldn't allow democratically elected boards to begin with, and instead she hand-picked mostly NDP partisans to fill the positions.

And although the government argue, well I think if we looked at the politics of everyone on these health district boards there probably are some . . . or no doubt are some, maybe Conservatives and some Liberals,

but I think in general the fact that it was politically appointed, or appointments by the government, is what has people feeling that, like they haven't had the opportunity to have their voice and they are not being listened to in fact, especially when the Minister of Health indicated that these district boards would be elected. And that's the biggest concern out there right now, is when? Why not this coming fall along with municipal elections?

It seems to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Health was more concerned with paying back election favours to NDP campaign workers than appointing individuals who are qualified and capable. I think when we look at a lot of these boards, most of the people had absolutely no experience whatsoever.

And we can go back to debates that took place in this Assembly prior to October of 1991. We'll find that the opposition of the day, the present government, continued to bring out the fact of political appointees and partisanship and partisan appointmentship of the former government and continually argued that this does nothing to build the province of Saskatchewan. It does nothing to provide services for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we have heard from people all across this province. And I think if the government has the . . . and ministers opposite continually argue on a day-to-day basis that they are listening to the people. If they are indeed listening to the people of Saskatchewan; if they are indeed listening to the general public; if they are listening to the representatives of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association or the Saskatchewan Rural Municipalities Association, Mr. Speaker, or the health boards across this province; if they are really listening — and even as some of the health districts have already called for — they would be putting a plan in place or in motion that would allow for district elections this fall along with municipal elections.

Mr. Speaker, I say if the government was listening, that's what they would be doing instead of spending \$200,000 on Mr. Stevenson and his fact-finding mission. And I think there are enough organizations and enough people, enough services already available across this province that could quite easily prepare the province, prepare the district boards for health elections this fall.

The president of SARM, Mr. Harrison, says, and I quote:

The Health minister assured SARM members that the election process would be one of the priorities established early in the health care reform process. We feel that the establishment of the independent commission is just another stalling tactic which local people feel is inequitable.

Mr. Speaker, holding health board elections is not only what the people of Saskatchewan want; it is what

the NDP government promised. SUMA, SARM, SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), and pretty well every other organization except for the one which represents the health boards, wants elections this fall.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend quite a while just talking about the different groups that have written to our caucus, the different organizations that have called us and asked for the Conservative opposition or the opposition in this Assembly to continue to raise this question and to continue to call on the Minister of Health and call on the Premier of this province and call on the government of this province to take the time to look very closely at holding elections this fall, in view of the fact that the electorate are calling for it, in view of the fact that so many people across this province are calling for it.

And if the government, as they say, have nothing to worry about, have nothing to fear, that it's fine, let's get on with the process, then let's get on with the process. Let's not stall any longer.

The fact that if you held the election this fall in conjunction with municipal elections, it would ensure a very high voter turnout, it would save money, it would provide the local autonomy that the minister has promised. The municipal election model was first proposed by Saskatchewan Health officials, so they're ready to roll.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that appointed health boards answer to the minister, not the people of their districts. And that, I believe, is where the problem lies. The fact that the appointed health boards right now are listening to the tune played by the department, by the minister, and by this government regarding how health expenditures will be expended or passed on to the people of Saskatchewan, they are not really listening to the electorate out there.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I've found out in my area, the electorate want the ability to vote for local health board directors, and they want that ability because they feel that it gives them the only real opportunity to question the decisions that are being made by the health district boards.

And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that most, if not all the individuals, are doing their best to represent their areas, thinking of the areas, and trying to provide the most adequate health care available to them in view of the circumstances that they face and the fact that they are making decisions that are going to affect local representatives and the local ratepayers with money that they have really no control over.

Mr. Speaker, they are sent a lump sum of money. They say okay, you administer this funding; you provide the best care possible. And the problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that local people are getting blamed for the cut-backs in health care. The onus is being put on the local health boards — health boards who were appointed by this government, rather than elected.

And the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province like to refer to the neighbouring province of Alberta and the problems that are being raised and have put upon Mr. Klein for the actions he has taken.

But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Klein has been upfront and his government has been upfront in telling the people of Alberta, this is what we must do. And they have taken the initiative, they have made the decisions rather than putting it on the shoulders of someone else out at the local area and then backing away and saying . . . at the end of the day the Minister of Health is going to say, we didn't close the hospital in Wawota or we didn't close the hospital in another community across the province of Saskatchewan. We didn't close those hospitals; it was the local health boards. We didn't cut back on the beds; it was the local health boards, the health district boards that made that decision.

And that's why many health district board members would prefer to have elections this fall themselves, and go out to the people and get their support and be elected. And then, Mr. Speaker, they feel that if they were duly elected they would have the real ability to look at the funding and the decisions that are being made. They would then take the onus for it, but they would also, I believe, Mr. Speaker, they would speak out and represent the people that they are working for.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, we go through the list. We have communities like the town of Carlyle and the village of Benson and the village of Rush Lake raising their concerns, the town of Moosomin in my constituency. And I just want to read this into the record:

Dear Minister: The Moosomin town council supports the proposed election of local district health boards in conjunction with the local government elections in October. Your decision is urgently required in order to start formulating the election process. Inaction on this matter can only cause more frustration.

And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that this town council is just feeling more frustration as well, as they sent the letter and only a few days later we see another commission established, and the fact that what they were asking the minister to do, the minister didn't even listen or take the time to listen. Let me just bring to the Assembly the comments made by the town of Carlyle:

Our council maintains that the provincial government must honour its commitment to provide for local control and accountability in the delivery of health services. Elected district health boards are an integral component of health reforms. It is our review that appointed boards cannot continue to make decisions on local service delivery without the authority provided by local elections.

And that's what I was just talking about a few minutes

ago. Urban government leaders have been lobbying aggressively for an October election that would be integrated with local government elections. We believe that through integration urban governments, school boards, and health boards will realize cost efficiencies. We also believe that integrated election benefits local voters and will encourage a higher turnout for the first district health board election.

For nearly six months, urban government leaders have been pressing for elected health boards. The call for elections also was a major policy issue at SUMA's recent annual convention. We agree with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association that the government's decision not to prepare in no way absolves the government of its obligation to deliver district health board elections in October of this year.

Mr. Speaker, for the minister to stand in this Assembly and say, we don't have the time or the ability to put in motion the election process for district health boards, I think is ludicrous in view of the fact that the government promised when they established district health boards some year and a half or two years ago that there would be elections within a year following the implementation of health district boards across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on quoting from villages and towns and RM (rural municipality) councils across this province that have come out in support of health district health board elections, such as the town of Wadena and the town of Redvers, the town of Kindersley. Mr. Speaker, there isn't an organization or group that's concerned about health care in the province of Saskatchewan that is not willing to work with the government and work with local governments to establish the process that would allow elections of district health board members this fall.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the process is in place. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is an uncomplicated process. I believe it could happen this fall and all it would take is for the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province and the Executive Council to just stand up, stand in their place and say: we've listened to the people; the people of Saskatchewan have said, yes, Mr. Premier, you promised us elections within a year of setting up the district health care boards. We're ready to roll. Give us those elections that the Premier said; we've been listening. We hear; we're ready to roll, and give the go-ahead, Mr. Speaker.

It wouldn't be a problem whatsoever for the people of Saskatchewan to not only go to the polls this fall to elect their municipal governments but to be able to cast their ballot in favour of district health board members. And I think, Mr. Speaker, the motion brought to this Assembly by my colleague, the member from Morse, is more than appropriate and it's time the government put actions to their words.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the

conclusion of my remarks I will be moving an amendment to the motion to:

Remove all of the words after the word "Assembly" and to replace them with the following:

commend the government for establishing the process whereby district health boards will be democratically elected locally, and by acknowledging and responding to the concerns raised by SAHO, ensuring that this historic election process is established fairly and properly from the outset.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have never had elected health boards in the province of Saskatchewan; they have been appointed. Now they're going to be elected because of the provisions of The Health Districts Act, which this government has legislated over the opposition of the Conservatives and the Liberals. But unlike the previous administration, before that process goes into place, we want it to be properly planned.

I find it somewhat ironic that members of the Conservative Party would get up in this Assembly and say that we should rush into these health board elections when they were members of a government, Mr. Speaker, that did not call an election within the five-year period within which an election should be held. And I'm referring to the fact that the election in 1991 took place more than five years after the Conservative Party was re-elected in 1986. So it's . . . you have to take it with a grain of salt, Mr. Speaker, when these new-found democrats come into the legislative Chamber and tell us that we have to rush into these health board elections.

But there's another very strange aspect to this, when you think about it, and that is that here we have the member from Morse and the member from Moosomin saying that we've got to rush ahead with these health board elections and get these health districts working with elected boards. But the fact of the matter is that these members and their colleagues in the legislature and their colleagues in the Liberal Party have fought the creation of health districts in the province of Saskatchewan, tooth and nail from day one. They have opposed health care reform from day one. They are opposed to the replacement of over 400 health boards, which the province of Saskatchewan had, with 29 health boards while we're trying to reform the system.

And when these members get up in this House and say that these health boards need to be elected and we get . . . and we need to get on with the job, we have to remember that these Conservatives and these Liberals have one objective, and one objective only. And that is to ensure that the process of health care reform fails. That is their objective. And let nobody in this House or who may be listening to this debate be mistaken about that at all. They have had one objective from day one, and that is to stop health care reform in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cline: — They opposed The Health Districts Act; they opposed replacing 400 boards with 29 district boards; they opposed provisions in The Health Districts Act that provide for the very first time in Saskatchewan history with the election of health boards. They opposed that, both of the opposition parties. And now they come in and they say, oh no, not only are we in favour of elections, we want them to happen very quickly.

Now what is their motive? Their motive is to play politics with health care reform. That is their motive. Their motive is not to bring about a better model of health care for the people of the province.

Now the members for Morse and Moosomin of course took the opportunity — and this really belies their motives, Mr. Speaker — while speaking to the motion, which supposedly is intended to speed up elections for health boards, they really took the opportunity to question the very nature of health care reform that's occurring in Saskatchewan.

And I guess what I would have to say to those members, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no reason why the province of Saskatchewan needs to have the highest number of hospital beds per capita probably in the world. There is just no reason for it.

And when the members play politics and try to stop the reorganization and the reform that is going on, I would suggest that what the members are doing is also failing to take part in improving health care for people in Saskatchewan, including rural Saskatchewan, areas those members represent.

And I think of the example of a lady who was in the *Star-Phoenix* some weeks ago who had to have a kidney removed, and she was from rural Saskatchewan. It used to be that if you had a kidney removed, you would have a lengthy stay in hospital and then a lengthy period of convalescence.

But because of the advent of laparoscopic surgery, this lady went into a hospital in Saskatoon and had her surgery through the laparoscopic surgery, which just involves the insertion of a few very small instruments into her body, and the kidney was removed that way. And that woman was out of the hospital in a few days and had a very short period of convalescence and then was on her feet within a week. Whereas before, she might have been laid up for several weeks or even several months.

And the fact of the matter is that the world has changed and the medical world has changed. Technology has changed and things can be done in hospitals for people that could not be done before. And they cannot be done in over 100 hospitals in Saskatchewan; they can only be done in a few of the larger centres, if not only one.

And when the members try to have the government

spend resources unnecessarily keeping operating rooms open in some hospitals that are never used, really the members are depriving people in those areas of access to the technology and treatment that they should have in urban centres.

And I really think, Mr. Speaker, that the creation of the health districts will lead to improved health care for people all over the province, not just in the city but in the rural areas too. Because although the members opposite talk about hospital closures, there have not been closures of hospitals in the province of Saskatchewan. There have been conversions, and those facilities will be used to provide services to people in a very practical way that people have not had before.

And I support that. It's too bad that the opposition parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, have so steadfastly opposed this in this House, because the reality is that people from across the world are actually studying what people in Saskatchewan are doing. They consider us to be leaders in health care reform once again.

And I think it's very sad that when something good is happening in Saskatchewan again and we're providing some leadership in terms of health care reform, that the other parties in the legislature simply want to make a political issue of it and play politics.

I said a few minutes ago that I found it ironic that the Conservative Party would be in such a rush to have elections to these boards when they both opposed the creation of the boards in the first place; they're vehemently opposed to them and also opposed provisions in the Health Districts Act that calls for elections of boards. So one minute, they're opposed to the boards, they're opposed to elected boards, the next minute, they're saying but the election should be held more quickly.

(1645)

It's a little bit inconsistent, and of course the Leader of the Liberal Party is fond of saying, when she makes her occasional contributions to health care debate, when she isn't totally preoccupied with her interest in gambling, she always makes the point, along with her cousins in the Conservative Party, that we're moving too quickly with health care reform. She says well of course we're in favour of health care reform. It's necessary, but it shouldn't happen right now. You're moving too quickly.

But now, today, we find the members of the opposition saying we're moving too slowly in terms of getting around to elections of these health care . . . health district boards, which they opposed the creation of, and the election of which they opposed when they voted against The Health Districts Act. So I find that a little bit inconsistent too, Mr. Speaker.

And when you listen to these inconsistencies and you see people trying to talk out of both sides of their mouths, you realize that they have one real objective

and that objective is to play politics.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that the health of the people of the province is much too important an issue simply to play partisan political games in the legislature, which leads me to this: the government has said in The Health Districts Act that it is committed to elected health boards. I say again that that provision was opposed by the Conservatives and the Liberals who now say that the elections should take place more quickly.

But I want to say that when you're planning something, I think, Mr. Speaker, you should plan it properly, and there are some unanswered questions when it comes to health board elections. It is unknown how those elections should be conducted precisely, how they should be conducted most economically and conveniently, what are the guidelines, what are the boundaries, what are the wards that people will be elected on, and who will be eligible to vote, whether it will be people that live in the district or whether it will also involve a ratepayer vote.

The district boards themselves are asking the government not to have elections this year. And I believe that at the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, which has thousands of members across the province, a resolution was unanimously passed saying to the government that this was not an appropriate time to hold elections because the boards have only been in place for six months and they're in the process of making some very major changes to the health care system.

And I would say that we ought to listen to the people that are involved in the health care system, to the thousands of people who dedicate themselves in a very community-spirited way, Mr. Speaker, to making this system work. And I'm not just talking about people on district health boards; I'm talking about people that volunteer in the hospitals and hold a variety of other positions in health care organizations. Those people I think deserve better than what we've heard in the legislature from time to time, including today, which is a suggestion that somehow they are politically motivated, that they are tools of the provincial government. That simply is not true.

And I noticed that the chairperson of the North-East Health District was moved some time ago, a number of weeks ago, to write a letter about how these boards are created, at least in so far as the North-East Health District goes, because there were some suggestions made, encouraged by the opposition, that these were political boards. These are not political boards; they're community-minded people.

And Mr. Don Scott, the chairperson of the North-East Health District, wrote and said that the local municipalities had suggested people to serve on the health board. It wasn't the provincial government; it was the local municipalities. And out of 12 persons, 11 persons on that board were people that were

suggested by the local municipalities, the local elected councillors, not people that were hand-picked by the Minister of Health or the provincial government.

And he makes the point that it's impossible to say with any credibility that a health board can be stacked by the provincial government for political reasons when the government is getting nominations from people at the local level, unless you assume there's some giant conspiracy to stack the health board elections.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that these people that serve on these boards are community-minded people and what they do is a labour of love on behalf of the people of their district. And I've met with the health board members in Saskatoon on several occasions, and the work that they put into this process of trying to change our system so that we can preserve the medicare system in a changing world is not something that they get paid large sums of money for. It's something that they do because they believe in our health care system and they believe in their communities.

And that's true in Saskatoon. I think it's true in north-east Saskatchewan. I think it's true throughout the province. And to get up in this House and say that these people have some kind of political agenda, I don't think is proper.

Now I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that these district boards, the creation of which was opposed by the opposition, the election of which was opposed by the opposition, were not established until the latter part of last year, quite late in 1993. And they're doing a lot of interim work and they're doing an assessment of what is needed in their community.

But these districts have not been in for a long time. They've been in less than a year. They certainly haven't been in the over five years it took for the previous administration to call an election in this province. And I might add that the Mulroney Conservatives weren't too far behind in that regard.

And I want to say too that Garf Stevenson was appointed by the province to look into how these elections could best be held. And I support that, because I think if we're going to have these elections it should be done properly.

And I want to say too that I disagree with the members opposite when they get up in this House and attack the reputation and integrity of Mr. Stevenson. I think Mr. Stevenson is a person who has served the membership of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool well, who has served his province well, and will continue to serve his province well.

But getting back to questions about how these elections are to be done, the boundaries of wards need to be established. It took a year to establish boundaries for the provincial constituencies. But with respect to the district health boards, for some reason after they're in place for a small number of months,

we're supposed to have ward boundaries in place, and those people trying to get those districts established are supposed to get elections organized.

And I don't think it's very realistic. But I think the purpose of it, Mr. Speaker, is to play politics, not to address in a practical way the health care needs of the people of the province.

There are certainly mixed views in the province, Mr. Speaker, about when these elections should be held; and there are mixed views about how they should be held and whether they should in fact be coordinated with local municipal and school board elections.

The health boards are really reinventing how health services are coordinated, managed, and provided in our province. And it's important that we do it right. I think it's very important that we do it right, Mr. Speaker. And as I said before, what needs to be stated here is that in the history of our province we've never had health board elections. This legislation is the first legislation that will enable people to elect health boards. We've never had health boards required to go out and hold public meetings with people in their communities.

And what the provincial government is in fact doing is not only reshaping the health care system to meet the needs of the people today, but it is moving forward in terms of making that a more democratic and accountable system; notwithstanding the vehement opposition of the members opposite in both the Conservative and Liberal parties, who have done nothing to cooperate with this process. I'm talking about members of those parties in the legislature, not members of those parties in the public at large. Because I think in the public, there are people from all political persuasions who are working to improve our health care system and working to make the health district boards work.

I noted before, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations met on this issue on January 27 of this year in Saskatoon, and they were unanimous — there wasn't a dissenting vote — in calling for a delay to health board elections. There was very strong consensus in that community that it was too soon for elections. And I guess I would suggest that the people who took five years to call a provincial election when they were in office, ought not to expect the district health boards to have elections after five months. It's not consistent and it's not fair. And the reason for this motion is simply to play politics.

I want to say also, the member for Moosomin I believe was referring to some editorial comment. Well there's been editorial comment that it is perfectly logical and consistent with health care reform to delay these elections. And in the Nipawin *Journal* of March 16 of this year, the Nipawin *Journal* said:

Considerable progress and initial momentum will be lost if elections are ordered this fall. It's true that those currently serving on the boards can run, but the system could go into a holding

pattern until voters have spoken.

And they point out that we don't need that. We need to reform the health care system and we don't need the people who have never supported reform and who want it to fail, trying to play politics and stop the reform from proceeding.

And with that . . . there are other editorial comments in *The Southwest Booster* and *The Four-Town Journal* along said line.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to move an amendment, seconded by the member from Regina Lake Centre:

That the words after "Assembly" be deleted and replaced with the following:

commend the government for establishing the process whereby district health boards will be democratically elected locally and by acknowledging and responding to the concerns raised by SAHO ensuring that this historic election process is established fairly and properly from the outset.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I move now, Mr. Speaker, that debate adjourn on this motion.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.