

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to inform all members this afternoon that the large group of students in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, are all from Westmount School, in the constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Mr. Speaker, there are 66 students there — 45 grade 8 students and 21 grade 4 students, Mr. Speaker. They are accompanied today by their teachers and chaperons — Kerry Kirkpatrick, Mike Murray, Grace Walton, Shawna Ferguson, Jerry Nekrasoff, Sandra Hammon, Olive Brummet, and Kim Longworth.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join with me in giving a warm welcome to the students from Westmount School in Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly, a group of grade 7 to 9 students from Colonsay School. I'm introducing them on behalf of my colleague, the member from Humboldt.

They're accompanied by their teachers — Les Eley and Laurie Ulrich — and their chaperon, Brenda Templeman, and I'm looking forward to meeting with them later on in the members' dining room to answer questions; and I hope that they enjoy the proceedings today and ask all members to join me in welcoming the students from Colonsay.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly five students who are seated in your gallery from the C.O.R.E. (Co-operative Optional Re-entry Education) High School. They are here with their teacher, Don Gartner, and I want to welcome them here today for question period.

I would say as well that I want to invite them to my office, room 322, after question period, where we'll have a chance to discuss the workings of the Assembly here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Thank You to Palliative Care Representatives

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rarely are we able, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the contributions of individual Saskatchewan people to

the formation of public policy, and I would like to do that today with respect to the new guidelines for the development of integrated palliative care service here in Saskatchewan.

These individuals represent physiotherapists, occupational therapists, cancer workers, clergy, nurses, doctors, social workers, palliative care coordinators, pharmacists, and home care workers. And the individuals are: Kam Chow, Rev. Ron Evans, Nancy Guebert, Miriam Hills, Felicity Hogg, Lorraine Holtslander, Kim Kerr, Luella Moore, Joan Sajtos, Brenda Thiessen, and Dr. Zachariah Thomas.

These individuals, Mr. Speaker, helped to give Saskatchewan new palliative care guidelines, helped to put concrete action into the wellness reform that is being done here in this province. And what better gift could we give those who are dying than a well-thought-out approach to how we will support them and their families and other care-givers.

So on behalf of all members of this Assembly, I want to say thank you to those who are working in the area of palliative care to bring these guidelines to bear.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Battered Women's Awareness Week

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 9 to 16 has been proclaimed Battered Women's Awareness Week by the ministers of Social Services and the Status of Women on behalf of the Provincial Association of Transition Houses.

Following our debate in this House, this week gives us all another opportunity to reflect on the impact of domestic violence on women and children in our society, and to once again send the message that such behaviour is intolerable.

The statistics themselves are staggering, and the reality behind the numbers is a discredit to our society. One in four Canadian women is abused. In Saskatchewan, it is one in five.

To counter this violence, we have introduced The Victims of Domestic Violence Act and also allocated \$4.4 million under the Saskatchewan action plan for children.

As well, the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat has developed an information kit on domestic violence. And the Provincial Association of Transition Houses promotes public awareness through a series of necessary activities. This is in addition to the heroic and unheralded work they perform on the front lines.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of this week should be its own extinction. Until that day comes, however, we must all recognize the need for the entire community to work for the elimination of violence.

I ask all members to join in raising awareness of this

vital issue. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chinchilla Ranching

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More economic development news from my constituency. We have had reports in this Assembly on ostrich farming, on share farming, on hog exports to Cuba, and on a host of other innovative ways Saskatchewan people are using to boost their own income and also the provincial economy.

I want to report on another enterprising individual who is helping us redefine the meaning of the word diversification. Gilbert Etcheverry, close to North Battleford but in my constituency, is Canada's largest chinchilla rancher. Started by John Etcheverry, Gilbert . . . It is Canada's largest chinchilla ranch, started by John Etcheverry; Gilbert rides the range on a business that has been in recession in the past few years but one that now shows signs of recovering.

At a recent sale in Winnipeg, the price for pelts averaged \$50 — that is double the average of two years ago and the demand is now outstripping production around the world. The Etcheverry enterprise is well positioned to take advantage of the excellent prices. This comes about because they have believed in their company and have handled their business well.

I'm glad to see the Etcheverrys' ranch succeed because, as I said, it once again shows the innovative quality of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Team Canada Wins World Hockey Championship

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the efforts of a group of Canadian men who accomplished yesterday what no others have been able to do since 1961. I'm speaking about Team Canada winning the gold medal at the World Hockey Championships in Italy. Canada beat Finland 2-1 in an overtime shootout yesterday to strike gold at the tournament for the first time in 33 years.

In particular I'd like to congratulate Kelly Buchberger, Rod Brind'amour, Joe Sakic, and Geoff Sanderson all of whom played junior hockey here in Saskatchewan and all of whom played a big role in Canada winning the gold medal.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Team Canada for once again proving that we're truly the best on ice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Saskatchewan's Population

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again today we are bringing questions from Saskatchewan citizens to the Legislative Assembly. And today my question comes from a Mr. Abe Cottrill of Caronport. And his question is: Mr. Premier, what are you trying to do about the negative population growth which is threatening Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the member opposite that the issue of population in Saskatchewan is one that . . . the debate on population has been going on for many, many years; as the member asking the question will know, that while he sat on the government side between 1986 and 1991 the population of Saskatchewan dropped very dramatically. He will also know that it has now balanced out and basically is stabilized at just a touch over a million people, and in fact we're hopeful that over the next and coming months, that the population of Saskatchewan will start to edge up again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tax and Utility Rate Increases

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from a Mr. E.A. Boston from Kipling. And his question is this: Mr. Premier, you promised utility rates would not rise, so why are the rates going up when the utility companies are making such a profit? Also, I want to know why you promised no more PST (provincial sales tax) and no tax hikes for Saskatchewan residents, and yet both have increased and we are getting less for our money.

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for the question. The utility rates in Saskatchewan are based on the cost of producing the resource that we're selling, whether it be electricity or natural gas or telephones, and that's what they're based on.

We expect all the utility companies will be running in the black and will be producing a profit, Mr. Speaker, so they can also help in getting the finances of Saskatchewan in order. So that when the utilities go up, it's not because of some whim or wish that somebody wants utility rates to go up. There's a good, solid reason for raising utility rates, and that is to keep the companies viable, to pay for the resource, and to keep the province viable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Use of American Health Care

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier as well, and it comes from Arthur Floer of Minton: Mr. Premier, I want to know why the people living along the United States border cannot continue using the American doctors and hospitals that are 25 minutes away. Our Saskatchewan hospitals and services are one and a half hours away. And all we ask is that the same rates as you pay in Saskatchewan are

paid to them. We'll pay for the rest, they suggest.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, as much as possible we encourage people to obtain their health care in Saskatchewan at Saskatchewan facilities and with Saskatchewan physicians. In situations of emergency, however, there are special provisions made if people want to get services in the United States or something of that order.

I want to indicate to the person who wrote the letter that it is very important that we keep our health care system affordable. And in order to keep it affordable, we must use Saskatchewan services as much as possible. There is recognition for compensation when there are emergencies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tax on Maintenance Payments

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from Tina Durbin from Fleming. And Tina is asking the Premier: based on a recent court decision that taxing child maintenance payments is discriminating against single parents, I want to know what your government is intending to do and when.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member on behalf of his constituent. I want to say that this being a federal matter obviously there are ramifications that may come back to the province. We're looking at it and we'll be able to give you a report once the analysis has been done. But at this point it's far too early to know what the ramifications might be given the fact that it's a federal matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Social Assistance Policies

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one more question to the Premier. This question comes from Anne King from Saskatoon. And Anne King would like to know: Mr. Premier, I would like to know what reasoning lies behind the NDP (New Democratic Party) social welfare policies. Are workers at the local level allowed to use their own judgement, and if so to whom are they accountable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. I want to thank Mr. King for the question. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Nan . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Nan for the question. As I understand the situation, having been the former minister of Social Services, when people in his position have difficulty with a tenant, for instance, who is receiving social assistance, they do have the opportunity to contact the local assistance worker to determine what may be done in order to assist, the landlord in this case, with a particular problem. So I would encourage the landlord in this situation to continue to work with the social assistance worker in

the Saskatoon area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cigarette Smuggling

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, you'll remember on Friday I asked a question about cigarette smuggling, in particular the case being tried in Melville involving two Peepeekisis Band members.

The case, as you may be aware, Mr. Minister, has now come to fruition. However, I would suggest that the results would be very unsatisfactory in the minds of most of the Saskatchewan public. Despite the fact that the two individuals involved were found guilty of smuggling about \$120,000 worth of cigarettes and tobacco, despite the fact that they were fined \$50,000, the judge effectively told them that they will never have to pay this fine. And I quote his comments: He said: "But I'm not going to turn this court into a collection agency."

Mr. Minister, this ruling sends a message to smugglers that they are under no obligation to obey the law. What further action does the Department of Justice intend to take in this matter? Is there anything your department can do to ensure that the penalties against these two individuals are enforced?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The member will know that this is a prosecution by the federal government under the excise and customs tax Act and not a charge laid by the provincial government.

I know the member has a great deal of respect for my office and for me but he must know that even my powers are limited. I can't overrule a judge's decision. I can't make a decision to substitute that of the judge. Nor can I take any form of appeal action considering that it is a federal prosecution.

Our system works in the way that it works. Judges fulfil their function, as do I, as does the hon. member. The judge here has spoken. It's not up to me to second-guess his motives. Nor is it within my power to appeal his decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm aware of the fact that this is a case of federal jurisdiction. However, Mr. Minister, you're still the Justice minister in the province, the supreme justice officer in this province, and I think the Government of Saskatchewan should be setting some leadership.

I'm not sure, Mr. Minister, if you happened to hear the Harasen line this morning, but I think there was some very interesting observations about justice that were brought forward. This case on last week is certainly indicative of what's happening in our society. And it

would seem to me, Mr. Minister, that not only are the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Canada, but even our police officers are becoming frustrated, frustrated with the system.

I think, Mr. Minister, what this is saying . . . and it's sending a terrible message to the people across this province. I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, what will you do to . . . and speaking to the Minister of Justice federally, Mr. Rock, and informing him that the actions that have taken place regarding this case in Saskatchewan are unacceptable and you will be pursuing this matter and asking for a clarification of the ruling here, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think that it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the member understands that there is nothing I can personally do in my capacity as the minister by way of appeal or by way of dealing with the decision of Mr. Justice Barclay.

I will however pick up on the member's suggestion and I will contact Mr. Rock and be sure that this case is drawn to his personal attention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, one further question. A few months ago when the federal government lowered cigarette taxes, the Prime Minister said they had to do so because they were unable to stop smugglers. And we suggested that that was a complete abdication of their responsibility.

And we commended you at the time and your government for not giving in to the pressure to lower tobacco taxes and for promising to crack down on smuggling. I think that's what's really worried Saskatchewan people today, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, the fact that the two individuals may walk away from the penalty that was imposed upon them, the fact that it's a crime and prosecution was done on the federal side, does not significantly take away or allow you to abdicate your responsibility. What I would like for you, Mr. Minister, is to indicate to the people of Saskatchewan what your government and what your department will be doing to really make it very clear to the federal Minister of Justice that these types of examples are not appropriate in this province, and that we will indeed stand up for justice in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I know that the member opposite and his party are of one mind with the government on this question of cigarette smuggling. We think that the federal action was the wrong action, and we are on top of this issue with all of the resources at our disposal. We also have the full cooperation of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) in trying to ensure that cigarettes are not smuggled into Saskatchewan.

The member will know that the charges in question date from 1992 and were before the recent relaxation in tobacco tax at the federal level and in some of the

provinces. We are working very closely with the federal government, and especially with other provincial governments in western Canada, trying to stop the flow of tobacco at the Manitoba-Ontario border if possible, and ensuring that smuggling does not take place in our province.

And I want to say to the member again, Mr. Speaker, that I will contact my federal counterpart, Mr. Rock, and bring this case to his attention so that appropriate federal action can be considered.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Legislation

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is for the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, you and I obviously have very different impressions of what is needed to protect Saskatchewan jobs. But ultimately it's not important what you or I think, but what Saskatchewan job creators think.

Your Premier struck a committee of business people to give him special advice on the economy. Has the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy advised you that changing The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act will be good for the Saskatchewan economy?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member. As recently as this morning, we held a two-hour telephone conference with PACE (Provincial Action Committee on the Economy). This is one of many discussions I've had with PACE members on the issue of the changes to The Trade Union Act and labour standards.

As you know, in our document **Partnership for Renewal**, we very clearly stated out in the document that we would be moving on such things as occupational health and safety, The Trade Union Act, as well as labour standards. In our discussions that we have had with PACE, obviously there have been many points of view put forward.

But I think it's fair to say that over all, the belief is that with the most recent announced amendments to The Trade Union Act, as proposed by the Minister of Labour, along with the amendments now proposed on labour standards, that is the House amendments proposed, that there is general agreement that we are headed in a direction whereby, I might add, for the first time in Saskatchewan's history, on dealing with labour standards and Trade Union Act, that actually there has been direct consultation with both sides of the formula, that is labour and business.

That's much more than can be said when the Liberals were in government and amended The Trade Union Act, or with Bill 104 when the then Conservative government arbitrarily changed The Trade Union Act on consultation with only one side of the formula.

And so this is how we're trying to balance dealing with business and labour, and we think we have got the proper mix.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, in an article dated today, which is May 9, the May 9 edition of the **Alberta Report**, Mr. Les Dubé, a member of the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy warns, and I quote:

He will move his company's main warehouse from Saskatoon to Calgary if The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act amendments succeed.

End of quote.

Mr. Minister, if one of the Premier's main advisers, one of your main advisers, will move his own company don't you think it's time that you accurately measured how many other businesses are going to take their jobs elsewhere?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the member opposite that I haven't had an opportunity to read the report where she alleges Mr. Dubé to have made the statement.

But what I can say is that there are a number of companies that we deal with on a regular basis; for example, this morning in talking to Dave Radford of Sears he made it quite obvious while he had concerns about labour standards when they were first introduced to the House, he made it clear that in our discussions with him that he is of the opinion that a proper balance has been struck and that Saskatchewan is a good place to do business.

I think it's fair to say that the vast majority of business people in this province want to stay in Saskatchewan and will find this a perfectly good place to do business. Not only that, there are a number of other companies looking, even as we speak, at moving to Saskatchewan and over the coming months we will have announcements to make that show that Saskatchewan does not stand out when it comes to labour law. Obviously labour will not be terribly overwhelmed that there aren't anti-scab legislation in the proposed amendments that we're putting in.

So what we have tried to do is find a balance that will meet the needs of business and labour, and I think in fairness, if the member were being fair, that she would see that this is a much better process than that used by the Thatcher government in the 1960s or by the Conservative government in the 1980s with Bill 104.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, a member of the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy, your senior independent

economic adviser, has been quoted as saying that the exodus of businesses from the province is not going to happen all at once, but it will be a steady process. He says, and I quote, Mr. Minister:

These labour laws will just accelerate something which began when the New Democrats took over this province.

Mr. Minister, your senior economic adviser is telling you that your policies are causing businesses to flee the province, and he implies that your government policies are the cause. In fact the title of the article dated today is: "Businesses brace to flee Saskatchewan," Mr. Minister.

In light of this advice, could you please tell the people of Saskatchewan whether or not you are willing to cease your labour Bills now.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — In typical, old-style Liberal politics, Mr. Speaker, we see today the member opposite trying to stop Bills that will improve the working condition for men and women who work in this province.

I can give you a guarantee that we will not be stopping, as you say, The Trade Union Act and labour standards, that is not . . . no intent. But what I can tell the member opposite is this: that whether or not the quotes she's using are recent ones from Mr. Dubé, or when the Bill was first introduced, we'll have to look at that, but obviously we will want to see whether or not her statement is accurate.

But what I can say as well, that in meeting with gas and oil companies in Alberta recently, within the last six weeks, they say that the reason that their portfolios are balanced towards investing in Saskatchewan, exploring for gas, is because of the lack of overregulation that they find in Alberta. And in fact when it comes to hooking up new gas wells, where it may take 18 months in Alberta, we're doing hook-ups in Saskatchewan in about 24 days to 30 days. And therefore their investment in Saskatchewan is overbalanced as it would be with Alberta.

So for you to stand there and say that everything is terrible in Saskatchewan and everything is rosy everywhere else simply flies in the face of reality, and you should try to get a grip on the facts of what doing business in Saskatchewan is all about before you make those outlandish comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cameco Trucking Contract

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. Mr. Minister, it has been reported that Cameco Corporation has cancelled a long-standing arrangement with Siemens Transport & Service Ltd. of Saskatoon and has given their business to a company controlled by two of its own board members. There was no tender involved in this

arrangement, which involves all of Cameco's northern transportation requirements.

Now, Mr. Minister, when a corporation gives a major contract to a supplier which is controlled by two of its own directors, wouldn't you agree that there is, at the very least, a perception of conflict of interest in this deal? Would you agree with that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cameco, as I mentioned in one other question period, is a privately owned company. It was privatized by the members opposite, who are now asking the questions. Cameco can make its decisions based on its own judgements, and that's what they're doing.

They've made a decision, they're a private company; the management makes that decision with the approval of the board of directors, and this government has nothing to do with the decisions of Cameco. And from our point of view there is no perceived or real conflict of interest here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan own 40 per cent of Cameco directly and another 9 per cent indirectly, through the federal government. So our interests in this deal are acute, especially when you consider that two members involved were voted onto the board by the existing Cameco board; a board which your NDP government appointed five out of eight; a board which includes notable people such as Allan Blakeney and Nancy Hopkins. Until that company is completely privatized by your government, you had better answer these questions.

And as I said, the two principals of the trucking firm voted onto the Cameco board by your appointments have been given an exclusive and lucrative contract. Can you tell me if you, your department, the board members of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) or members of cabinet were involved in nominating or recommending these members to the board?

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just run through very quickly how the members of Cameco board are elected. There's a nomination process that takes place, and the three organizations or three partners — that's Saskatchewan, the federal government, and the private shareholders — nominate members or a slate of officers to a selection committee. A selection committee then recommends to the board of directors a slate of 12 directors. Since Saskatchewan is a 33 per cent shareholder in Cameco, we are entitled to five board members. And five of those people are then selected from this slate, who are nominated by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Did our cabinet, did the department, or did I personally have anything to do with the nominations? The answer is yes, I have something to do with the nominations. We submit to the Cameco board a list of

possible board members, and then the selection committee recommends a slate of officers to the Cameco board — Cameco shareholders, I should say.

Did we have anything to do with the awarding of the contract? The answer is no. I read about the awarding of this contract in the paper, as the members opposite did, and this is purely under the purview of the management and the board of Cameco.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, are you saying that you had absolutely no knowledge of this arrangement with this trucking company? I want you to be very clear. The Cameco board has five out of its eight members, as you just stated, appointed by your government. One is none other than Allan Blakeney. And reportedly he has a special service contract with Cameco board. They report to you; that is why they are there.

Are you saying that the appointment of the same two individuals who control the new trucking company was just a coincidence? Is that what you're saying, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Just to repeat again, Mr. Speaker, how these board members are selected. Saskatchewan nominates people to a selection committee; so does the federal government; so do the private shareholders. The selection committee then chooses 12 — I'm not sure where the member gets eight from but there are 12 board members on a Cameco board — selects 12 people to sit on the Cameco board.

This slate of nominees is then presented to their annual meeting, and the shareholders either reject or approve the slate of officers. They accepted this slate of officers. And the two members in question that the member's referring to, one of them is a Saskatchewan nominee; the other is a nominee from either the federal government or the private sector.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, your answers aren't acceptable, Mr. Minister. You are responsible for the CIC which has controlling interests on the board. It is incumbent upon you to personally review this situation and report back to this Assembly.

Taxpayers would dearly like to hear that there was no conflict of interest on the decision in the part of these two individuals when they made that decision on that trucking firm; that there was no political interference on your part or the cabinet's or anyone else's. And we want to know whether you will undertake to give that review today, to provide that to this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Mr. Speaker, I can unequivocally say that there was no interference and no conflict of interest from the Government of Saskatchewan on the appointment of this trucking firm to do the hauling for the Cameco Corporation.

What happened internally is not our concern. This is a privately owned company; it is run by a board of directors and a management. They make the decision as to who does the trucking for Cameco.

And just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, the company that got the trucking contract is an Alberta company who's moving into Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 64 — An Act to amend The Credit Union Act, 1985

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Credit Union Act, 1985 be now introduced and read a first time.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Bill No. 55 Removed from Order Paper

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to make a Speaker's ruling.

I draw to the attention of members that until recently this Assembly had two Bills with substantially the same purpose on the order paper — Bill No. 55, An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act, under the name of the member from Shaunavon; and Bill No. 63, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act (No. 2), under the name of the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

According to Erskine May, 21st edition, page 468, and I quote:

There is no rule or custom which restrains the *presentation* of two or more bills relating to the same subject, and containing similar provisions. But if a decision of the House has already been taken on one such bill, for example, if the bill has been given or refused second reading, the other is not proceeded with if it contains substantially the same provisions;

I would also direct members to a ruling of the Chair of this Assembly on May 17, 1990 on the same question ruled in respect to Bills. It was ruled that once the Assembly has given or refused second reading on one Bill, the Speaker then must prevent any further consideration of the other Bill.

On May 5, Bill No. 63 received second and third reading. Consequently it is necessary that Bill No. 55 be removed from the order paper.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of the House to introduce a motion to appoint the Conflict of Interest

Commissioner.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Appointment of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving a motion that Derril McLeod, Q.C., of the city of Regina be appointed on a permanent basis as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner by this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall in the last session of the Legislative Assembly, The Members' Conflict of Interest Act was introduced. Implementation of this Act has been a major step forward in fulfilling this government's commitment to democratic reform. It has been a major step forward in ensuring that violations of the public trust do not occur.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, takes a very clear and precise approach to a number of elements. First of all, it clearly defines the concept of conflict of interest for a member of this Assembly. Secondly, it sets out the duties required of the members of the Assembly and cabinet ministers to avoid such a conflict of interest. Third, it establishes the Office of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

The commissioner's role in the operation of the legislation is vital and I would like to speak to that role briefly. Members will be required to disclose all their personal and business interests and those of their spouse and dependent children to the commissioner for use in a public disclosure statement.

Members must seek the approval of the commissioner before participating in any government contract. The commissioner may be asked to rule on potential violations of the Act and may conduct an inquiry for that purpose.

I am pleased to note that this legislation was introduced and passed by this Assembly with the support of all members.

I'm also pleased to note, Mr. Speaker, that in February of this year the Board of Internal Economy appointed Derril McLeod as Acting Conflict Commissioner until such time as the appointment could be ratified by this Assembly.

We all know Mr. McLeod as a senior and well-respected member of the Saskatchewan legal community. We are also pleased to have him presently serving the people of Saskatchewan in his capacity as the Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Following his appointment as Acting Conflict Commissioner, Mr. McLeod has met with each of the caucuses of the political parties represented in this Assembly to ensure that all members are fully

informed of their responsibilities under the legislation. He has also been working to develop the regulations necessary for the implementation of this legislation later this summer.

We are indeed fortunate to have had an individual of the calibre of Derril McLeod serve as Acting Conflict Commissioner. I am pleased to propose that his appointment be made permanent as the province of Saskatchewan's first Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

I would like to conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by making the following motion, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition:

That this Assembly hereby appoint Derril McLeod, Q.C. of the city of Regina, in the province of Saskatchewan, Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 18 of The Members' Conflict of Interest Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me today to rise in the House and join the minister in seconding the nomination of Mr. McLeod. As the minister said, this is a move I think that all members welcome. There are a number of issues that have arisen over time, Mr. Speaker, where I'm sure the commissioner will be able to help out.

And I think it's also important, as the minister noted, that all members of this Assembly have the confidence in this new commissioner, that we do support it in a unanimous way. We've had the opportunity to have a visit with Mr. McLeod and I spent about an hour of time discussing various potential issues, and I think the caucus really appreciated his very frank answers. When he didn't understand something, he said, I'll certainly take that under advisement; I'll get back to you.

Mr. McLeod has made the endeavour that he will meet with each and every member of this Assembly and I think that's absolutely necessary to gain the kind of trust that the public would want in an officer of this Assembly performing those functions. All of us understand in public life that you not only must be above any suspicion in matters, but you must be perceived to be. And I think it not only in the best interest of the taxpayer but also the members of the House.

So I join with the minister in seconding the motion and welcome Mr. McLeod to his new job and very much look forward personally to visiting with him as I'm sure all members do.

And at the end of the day the process of democratic reform in this institution will be taken one step further. And I hope that with this move toward more democratic reform, that the members of the

government are prepared to also look at a number of other initiatives which I think would go a long way down the road to making the public feel more comfortable with their institution, their parliament, the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(1415)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to speak in favour of this motion as well by the Attorney General, the member for Saskatoon Fairview, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, appointing the Conflict Commissioner, Mr. Derril McLeod.

Mr. McLeod has an exemplary reputation in our province and within the legal profession. And during his 47 years of legal practice since being admitted to the bar, Mr. McLeod has developed a long and very impressive professional resumé. He also shows a tremendous personal dedication to his community and is evidenced by his many years serving on the Board of Governors of both universities and on the boards of the Regina Pioneer Village, the Wascana Centre Authority, as well as SED Systems.

This Assembly is perhaps most familiar with Mr. McLeod through his role as the Information and Privacy Commissioner, a role which he has served since 1992.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that all members of this Assembly and especially the people of Saskatchewan will be very well served to have Derril McLeod responsible for the tasks that we have entrusted to our Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I'm very, very pleased that this has happened today.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Simard that **Bill No. 28 — An Act respecting Public Health** be now read a second time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill 28 represents the rewriting of The Public Health Act that has been in existence in this province since 1909. And of course that Bill has been revised on a number of occasions since that time.

It is of vital importance that the health of our children and families are protected in our schools, workplaces, and homes. Each and every citizen in Saskatchewan

has a right to clean water, safe food, milk and milk products, in order to maintain healthy lifestyles.

Regulating these substances also allows the government the opportunity to do as much as possible to control communicable diseases — diseases such as hepatitis, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), and others need to be suppressed and controlled as much as possible.

Controlling non-communicable diseases must be a priority of every government in this country as well. Each and every one of us has a family member or friend who has suffered from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or other serious non-communicable diseases, and it's a terrible ordeal for the families of these people and the persons affected to go through. These are the non-communicable diseases that kill many Saskatchewan people every year, and it is important that we all work together to continue to prevent the spreading of these deadly afflictions.

I've been in contact with Dr. Kendel from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, and he informed me that his organization supports this Bill. Mr. Speaker, there are some specifics that I would like to question the minister on in Committee of the Whole, but until that time, I see no reason why Bill 28 cannot be sent forward to committee.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Simard that Bill No. 29 — **An Act respecting the Health Services Utilization and Research Commission** be now read a second time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill 29 allows for yet another commission to be set up by the members opposite to study. They have set up commissions to study judges' salaries, commissions to study clean air, the Sask Pension Plan, store hours, the Crown Life deal — and the list goes on and on.

This government talks a lot about independent, arm's-length bodies of the government. In fact the Health minister used these very words to describe the Health Services Commission in her second reading speech. Yet keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that these are the same people said that the commission set up to review judges' salaries was independent and their decisions would be binding on the government. And the Saskatchewan government will probably wind up spending a million dollars when they lose that case in the Supreme Court.

When decisions of the NDP commissions don't suit their political agenda, the recommendations of these independent commissions are cast aside. We've seen it time and time again, Mr. Speaker. And there's

another side to this coin as well. When NDP ministers want to duck decisions like threats made by the Liquor and Gaming Commission to the Warman fire department, they say sorry, that's an independent branch of government and I can't overturn their decisions.

Or when the Health minister is asked to review Interferon for hepatitis C sufferers, she says well that's not covered and there's nothing I can do about it.

Well which way is it, Mr. Speaker? It can't be both ways. The government's news release dated March 7, 1994, states that: one of the objectives of health care reform is to make the best possible use of the resources we have.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that if the Health minister is serious about saving money, I can give her a couple of free suggestions — suggestions that were already made to her by SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), and others.

They say forget about Garf Stevenson's independent study on health board elections. That could save you \$200,000 right there. Then hold elections as promised which would save the city of Regina \$500,000 and the rest of the province and the city of Saskatoon another \$500,000, and the list goes on. A couple of million dollars could be directed towards proper health services just through these few, easy decisions.

Now I'm sure some of the information compiled to date by the Health Services Commission has been very helpful, Mr. Speaker, but is it really necessary to set up yet another commission to review health services in Saskatchewan?

In order for the commission to function, there was a research staff plus other researchers hired on a contract basis and the minister stated the cost for the first year was \$610,000. That was reported in the *Leader-Post*, February 21, 1992. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of money and it's important that the citizens of this province know just where that money is being spent and what they are getting as a result of that spending.

When the former government's Murray Commission outlined its recommendations for the direction of health care in Saskatchewan, the current Health minister spoke loudly against it. While in opposition the Health minister criticized the Murray Commission's finding roundly. She said and I quote:

I do not like the Murray Commission's regionalization proposal. I do not like that proposal.

The *Hansard* of June 5, 1990.

And she said as well:

... health care costs as spiralling out of control, and that's a phrase that we've heard a lot in the

last few years. Yes, we've heard it many times, and it's all part of the PC rhetoric to try and get people to believe medicare cannot be properly financed and cannot be publicly funded without cut-backs, without cut-backs or some form of rationalization of health care services. That's all part of the PC rhetoric to attempt to convince people that in the province of Saskatchewan that we cannot afford medicare as we know it and we have to make changes.

That was in *Hansard*, reported June 5, 1990.

She said there was no need for the rationalization, no need for any cut-backs or job losses, and that she did not support the Murray Commission in any way. The current minister said that.

I guess the minister has had quite a change of heart since her commission is headed by Dr. Stewart McMillan, the same man who chaired the Murray Commission's hospital utilization management system's task force. Finally, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have come to realize that the advice received a few years back was worthwhile after all.

I will be having a number of questions that I will be directing towards the minister. For instance, if the commission is to have input from all over the province, why are 10 of the 12 individuals on the commission from Regina and Saskatoon? And I'm sure that the minister will be happy to answer those kinds of questions once we reach the committee stage.

And at this point, Mr. Speaker, I see no reason why we would want to delay it any further.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the member opposite's clarification, I wish to say the following. The utilization commission that is being established is nothing like the Murray Commission. It isn't anywhere close to being like the Murray Commission.

This is a commission that replaces the Health Research Board that was funded by their government and by our government for a period of time. It's a consolidation of health research and has added the component of health utilization. It is a commission that's established of people with very special skills, and that's why many of them come from the urban centres and from Saskatoon, associated with the medical college. They have very special skills to analyse health services utilization.

Now this isn't the only province with a commission of this nature. There are many of them across Canada with health services utilization commissions. The purpose of the commission is to analyse how health care services are utilized and whether or not we can use our health dollars more effectively. To date, just on the thyroid testing alone that the commission did — and that's only one of many studies it's done already — we've saved at least a million dollars annually.

They have put out studies in other areas that have generated huge savings to the health care sector because what they do is point out, for example, that this kind of testing should only be done under this criteria.

This information is sent out to the medical profession and to others. And as a result they don't continue to test unnecessarily or in cases that may not be appropriate. As a result there are savings and the patient gets a higher quality health care because we know that people shouldn't be tested unnecessarily.

That's just one of the kind of things this commission does. It does not do as the member opposite suggests, go out about the province and talk to people. That's not the purpose of the utilization commission. Hasn't done that in the last year and a half; it won't do it in the future.

It analyses services and determines whether they're being used more appropriately. In addition, there is funding for this commission to do the kind of health research . . . and provide health research grants to particular specialists in the province to maintain certain health research.

So to make an analogy between this and the Murray Commission is totally incorrect. They're nothing at all like that. In fact this body replaces a body that was already there under their government as well, but the mandate has been expanded.

So I'm very surprised that the member opposite has sat in this legislature now for two and a half years, this body was put together over a year ago, and the member still doesn't understand what its mandate is or what it is attempting to do. So that I find very surprising that he wouldn't understand.

As to the regionalization that he referred to in the Murray Commission, the Murray Commission regions were purporting to establish regions of 40 to 80,000 people. Now the member opposite comes from a rural constituency. He knows that his community would have been very upset if the Murray Commission had demanded a region of 80,000 around his home town of Eston or wherever he comes from in that particular area.

We know that the people of Saskatchewan wanted to work in smaller communities. Therefore the Murray Commission regionalization of course wasn't appropriate for Saskatchewan we felt, after consulting broadly with people across Saskatchewan, because the regions being proposed were so large.

Now the members opposite have . . . the member alluded to the fact that we criticized the way they were handling medicare. And that is correct. Because they had absolutely no plan as to how they were going to deal with the need to revamp the health care system and provide a better quality health care system in Saskatchewan. They had absolutely no plan. And we criticized that constantly when we were in opposition

What we saw under their government was simply cut-backs without any plan and we're witnessing that already in some other jurisdictions. We see in Alberta, for example — another Tory government — major cut-backs without any plan, Mr. Speaker, for a better health care system down the road.

Now Alberta, however, may be putting together a plan. But the point is, is they've started out with that approach which was the approach we saw under the former Tory government and which we've criticized very roundly.

But to get back more specifically to the Health Services Utilization Commission, I do want to impress upon the member opposite that this commission has also been stated to be if not the best, one of the best of its kind in Canada. The contribution it has made to Saskatchewan society is already being acknowledged nationally; that this commission is of a very high quality, it has done some tremendous work, and it is considered to be if not the best in Canada, one of the best. Thank you.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

(1430)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

The Chair: — I would invite the minister at this time to introduce the officials who have joined us here this afternoon.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much. To my left, Mr. Chair, is Mr. Duane Adams, the deputy minister; to his left, Kathy Langlois, the acting executive director of management support services; immediately behind him, Mr. Rick Kilarski, acting executive director of finance and administration; Mr. Dan Perrins, associate deputy minister; Ms. Glenda Yeates, associate deputy minister; and Ms. Lorraine Hill, the senior associate deputy minister.

Item 1

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, and welcome to your officials this afternoon.

We'll, I guess, deal maybe first of all with some unfinished business of the last opportunity we had to speak with you with respect to the global questions that we provided your department with prior to the budget, I believe it was.

At that time you had promised that you would have those hopefully completed for the next opportunity, which I guess is now, this afternoon. I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if you would provide us with the answers to those questions.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — We understand they've already been sent over to you, is that not correct? This is what I'm being advised.

Mr. Boyd: — No, Madam Minister, to my knowledge they haven't been sent to my office at least, anyway. We'll check on that but to my knowledge we haven't received them.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Okay. I'll check on it as soon as we leave, okay?

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Madam Minister, there's a couple of very specific type items that I wanted to deal with first of all, and they come from . . . Actually there are two constituents of my own in fact — situations that I think are of importance. A gentleman by the name of Mr. Gordon Leach called my office, and I in turn called your office with respect to a situation that I think points to the need for some review of the health care system.

Mr. Leach's wife has been waiting some seven months now for a hip surgery operation. She was told originally that it would be scheduled for April, just past, and now they've called the Leach family and have told them that it will be some time before . . . an undetermined time before the actual surgery will be scheduled now.

As I say, I brought it to the attention of your office directly, Madam Minister. And I'm wondering if there's anything that you could report back this afternoon with respect to that particular situation, and I guess the larger issue of the extended periods of time people are having to wait in Saskatchewan for surgery.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Well the member opposite knows that I cannot deal with the individual case on the floor of this Assembly, and so I won't.

Now with respect to waiting times for orthopedic surgery, the member opposite is also aware that I had commissioned an independent panel to look into that matter some time ago. They have reported, as I'm sure the member opposite is aware, and the report has been given to the Regina Health District Board. My deputy advises me that the Regina Health District Board has been looking at ways of implementing recommendations in the report and have implemented a substantial amount of it.

I understand that there may be some sort of reorganization of allocation of time, because the issue really comes down to allocation of operating time and bed time. And it's my understanding that the Regina Health Board is not only looking into the issue but has been acting on it. And hopefully this will help out with cases of this nature.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And the second specific type of question that I have for you this afternoon — I understand you can't respond to these things directly, but I wanted to . . . I guess these people had asked me to bring them up with you personally

and that's exactly what I'm doing.

A gentleman from Eatonia, Saskatchewan, by the name of Erwin Jasman — Mr. Jasman has been suffering with migraine headaches for some time. The only medication that seems to be working for him is one called Imitrex, I believe it's pronounced. And it is not currently under the formulary plan so he's having to bear the full responsibility of costs for it. It's something in the order of \$45 per dose of this drug. He has to take something in the range of two a week.

I guess the question that he would ask is simply this, is how long a period of time does it take before a drug is reviewed and then put onto the plan?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Okay, for the member opposite's edification, I have been advised that the questions were delivered to your office a couple of weeks ago, so would you check with your office. And we can get you more copies if they've been misplaced.

Now with respect to the prescription, the drug Imitrex. Now there are two times in the year that the committee puts a new drug on the list if it's going to go on the list, and that's July 1 and January 1 in each year. That process is completed twice a year.

Now what happens as to what length of time does it take? Well there isn't any set length of time because the committee reviews the effectiveness of the drug and whether or not this is the type of drug that should be put on the formulary.

They will need information from the manufacturer. They will then test the drug and review the information. They may then need more information from the manufacturer. So it will really depend on the particular situation. So there isn't a set time for a drug within which it goes on or doesn't go on. But the two dates that are available for it coming onto the formula is July 1 and January 1.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I just wonder if this sort of situation is happening with increasing frequency. Are we seeing people being prescribed drugs that are not under the plan right now with increasing frequency, and if so, if that's the case, is there a need for the committee to meet more frequently than that to review these types of situations? Or is it your opinion or your officials' opinion that it's adequately met.

We've seen, I guess now, Madam Minister, a couple or three situations that I can recall in the course of this session where . . . Taxol is one of them, as you remember, and I just forget the name of the other drug, that were brought forward. It seems to me that maybe the time frequency of the committee meetings isn't often enough to deal with this problem. If it is indeed increasing in frequency, I just wondered if you'd comment.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — First of all I have been asked to point out that Taxol is under a different system. It doesn't go under the drug plan formulary. It is a drug

to deal with cancer, so it's the Cancer Foundation structure that takes a look at Taxol. So it's into a different category and it goes through a different route.

Now as to the drug plan formulary system, the drug plan formulary people meet once a month, and they revise the formulary twice a year, and it's at regular set intervals. This is something that we enjoy in Saskatchewan. Other provinces have longer periods of time or they're not at regular intervals before the formulary is revised . . . or some other provinces.

So we believe that the system in Saskatchewan, which has always been this way and continues to be this way, is they meet once a month, and twice a year the formulary is revised. And as to increased requests, no, we have not noticed any increased requests. This is quite normal for people, new drugs to be produced or different drugs to be lobbied to go on the formulary, and it's reviewed systematically in that fashion.

I do have a concern, however, with the increase in drug costs that we've experienced as a result of the drug patent legislation that was put in under the former Mulroney government which has shot the cost of drugs up right across the country.

(1445)

I forget what the statistics were, I forget what the numbers were, but I think when we took government it was 80 million or 89 million in drug costs. And even with reductions that took place in the first year, it would have gone up to over 100 million just with the increases that came on from the drug patent legislation. And we still haven't felt the second round of increases as a result of the most recent Mulroney measures.

So we are concerned about that, about increase in drug costs and the fact that we now have to pay for brand name drugs when we used to be able to move to generic drugs much more quickly. However, our formulary in Saskatchewan is considered to be very good and is often looked to as a precedent setter by other provinces. We have highly qualified people on the formulary. They deserve a lot of credit and recognition from the government and Saskatchewan people. They've been doing an excellent job.

So we haven't noticed a particular increase in people wanting their drugs on the list, but we work with this every time the issue comes up and we target January 1 and July 1 as the dates under which we can achieve a change in the formulary.

Mr. Boyd: — So as I understand what you're saying then, Madam Minister, there is no increasing frequency of these problems coming up where people are . . . we aren't seeing a flood of new drugs coming forward and therefore a need for the committee to meet more frequently.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — I'm advised we don't have the statistics as exactly how many drugs are being reviewed now and how many before, but we don't

have a backlog and there's a constant flow of drugs through the system. So there is no problem with a backlog. And they meet once a month.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, and your officials, greetings again.

Just to review, when we were together last time we had spoken about the Department of Health mandate. You'd expressed what was your vision for the department; we talked about department objectives and goals, department structures and processes, and some general administrative questions as well were posed.

Just to continue with some greater specificity today, I'd like to talk with you about staffing. The total staff has been reduced by approximately 35 full-time equivalent positions, but this is an overall total. And I'm wondering how many employees have been hired in your department through the Public Service Commission in the past year.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The reduction has actually been 36. And as to how many employees have been hired through the Public Service Commission, we don't have that information available. We would have to do a count by count for the whole year to determine that. We can get the information if you want it. It'll take a while for us to put it together.

There is a constant recruitment that goes on in the Department of Health because we have so many people in the field. The 36 reduction is a net, after we've hired and people have left and so on. Okay? Thank you.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much. Madam Minister, it's not necessary to have that information immediately, but it would be of interest to know, so if there is . . . I'm sure that you're gathering this information anyway. We would very much appreciate you sending that to our office when you have it.

I would like to know, when you gather that information, how many of those newly hired employees are classified as in scope and those that would be classified as out of scope. How many employees have been transferred from in scope to out of scope this past year?

And I'd ask to be provided with a complete list if I may, of those transfers including — and I'll state this slowly so your officials can get it down — by employee name; by department; by old classification or title; by new classification or title; and salary change, if any.

And I will agree to this as well being provided with these details outside of the House, but I would appreciate an answer to the original question if I may, today, which is how many employees have been transferred from in scope to out of scope status during this past year?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Okay, we don't have that

information immediately but we can get it, and will get it for you as soon as we possibly can. If we can get it for tomorrow or the next day, we'll do that.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much. What I will do, I would just like to pose three questions then that may be in the same category as what I've just been putting forward to you, so if you're gathering this information it's all in the same ballpark.

How many employees have been reclassified in your department in the past year through the Public Service Commission's reclassification process, and was the reclassification process initiated by the employee, by the department, or by the Public Service Commission?

And secondly, could you commit to provide me with a list of all positions that have been reclassified by your department in the past year? And that of course would be providing position number, employee name, department, old classification or title, new classification or title, and salary change, if any.

And I am interested in knowing whether or not your department abolished any positions or terminated any staff in this last budget. And if the answer to that is yes, when you're providing our caucus office with the information, if you could then use the details from that previous question and answer each one of those — the position name, the employee name, the department, and classification, and that kind of thing as well. Is that doable?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — We can provide that.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much. Madam Minister, I would like to move into the cost of severance questions on March 18, 1993, the budget date for the 1993-94 fiscal year. It was stated that your government cut 291 government positions. The minister for the Public Service Commission has already confirmed that the cost of severance to those individuals was \$2.8 million government wide. I'm wondering if you could advise me, please, of the cost of severance to those employees, to the employees that are from your department.

And I ask you to provide the following information at a later date. First, the positions that were abolished, including the position number and working title; the name of the employee employed in the position at the time of abolishment; (c) the seniority or years of service of each terminated employee; (d) the amount of severance paid to each employee; (e) whether the employee has since been re-employed with the government and where; and (f) what has the domino effect been in the departments where staff were eliminated — for example, how many jobs were reclassified and at what cost in order to absorb the duties of the terminated employees.

Now what I will do is just reiterate then the question that I think could be better answered today, and the rest I think will probably have to be addressed in writing.

I'm wondering if you could tell us how much the severance cost to . . . payments to those from the Department of Health were in the past year?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The total cost of severance for '93-94 was \$377,455. As to the other information, we will have to get it together in a package for you.

Ms. Haverstock: — I'm going to move to subvote questions now — the first on administration. Your officials have saved \$115,000 in administrative spending; and could you tell me please how this was achieved and where one was able to save the money?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The 115 million is a . . . 115,000 rather, was largely saved in reduced computer and related costs, and reduced travel and other miscellaneous costs.

It is a balancing, however. I understand that that's the net figure because there were some increases in some areas, but the savings were primarily in reduced computer costs and reduced travel and other miscellaneous.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. How have internal administrative services changed as a result of that savings? In other words, are there any services that your department is now going without?

(1500)

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you. I guess in a general way what we can say is this, is that the Department of Health is getting away from minute administration of the health care system and we're instead trying to use the time of our administrative officers to get involved with helping the districts set up their systems and work through the coordination that's taking place in the health care system.

So we're moving more into district development time, as opposed to minute administration because we are trying to move to global funding for districts. We want district boards to take over responsibility for a broader range of health care services instead of just institutions. They will go beyond that. And so much of our time is being taken up in working with districts as opposed to administering the health care system in a more minute fashion. That is one of the ways that there has been a change in internal administrative services.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. The second subvote is on accommodation and central services and I note that the accommodation budget is going down by some \$766,000. How has this cost reduction been achieved? And I'm curious as well about the department operations and whether or not they're affected as a result of that size of decrease in the budget.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — That subvote was largely a one-time budget. It had to do with developing the forensic unit and also with some reorganization within the department and it was a one-time vote and the reason it's not there is those things have been

completed.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. So what you're saying is that the reason why the size of monies was in the budget in the first place was for a one-time project? Okay.

There was a charge for what's called capital operating that appears in the budget and it just seems like a contradiction in terms. I'm wondering . . . in other words, capital costs, in my view, are usually different from those which are operating costs.

Can you tell me what it means, like what this term actually means? What was the spending for, and how was the money spent? I'm just wondering how those functions are funded now as well. I mean I was quite confused by that.

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Well the member opposite may wish to get more clarification on this when talking to the Finance minister. However I'll explain it as best I can.

The capital operating is when the Department of Health pays SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) to do renovations or construction within government facilities. And so we paid a sum of money for the renovations pertaining to the forensic unit. That becomes capital operating. That's different from the capital that's referred to further on, because that is the money that we provide to district boards to renovate their health centre or to do other . . . the hospital in La Ronge and so on.

So we distinguish it that way. SPMC is capital operating, and the other capital is capital that goes to third parties to do their capital construction.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much. The subvote on district health services and support, there's a \$10 million cost reduction in the acute and rehabilitative services. And on the one hand, I can imagine that there are a number of areas where costs rose, and then many other areas where there were cuts. Since \$544 million is a substantial sum of money by anybody's standards, it's a substantial lump sum, particularly in a budget, will you tell me where the cuts came and where the savings were found?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The 9 million or 10 million that you're referring to is a . . . First of all there was a reduction in acute care funding that was announced, not this budget but last budget, of minus 2.8. And then there was the impact of recently negotiated collective agreements. And that forms that 10 million.

There was a further increases in district board budgets that are as follows: for example home-based and community services had a \$3.5 million increase; emergency response services, 442 — 3.59 per cent increase; there was a rural health initiatives fund of 10 million; there was . . . and some other increases. I'm having a little difficulty reading through all of this; there's writing all over it. But I can get you all that detail if you wish.

But the 10 million consists of acute care and negotiated collective agreements, and then there's increases in other areas such as emergency response system, rural health initiatives fund, home-based and community services.

Mrs. Bergman: — I'd like to take up the questioning now. How will the budget cuts affect rehabilitation services?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — There have been no cuts to rehab services. And in fact what we have moved to do is to provide direct access to physiotherapists, for example, which will allow patients to go directly to a physiotherapist, which will, first of all, provide easier accessibility but should also generate some savings in the sense that they don't have to go through a physician to get a referral to a physiotherapist.

We have also established the rural initiatives fund of \$10 million. And so district boards, when they're doing their needs assessment and their analysis of what the needs are, if more rehab services is shown as a need in a community that is of a priority nature, some of that funding could be channelled into that kind of direction.

We also increased home care in community-based services by 3.5 million, and some of those services are used with respect to the rehab area as well. So there hasn't been a reduction in services; if anything, there's been a fairly substantial increase in the services that potentially could be available to the community.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The proposed Automobile Accident Insurance Act, Bill No. 56, places a top priority for spending on rehabilitation, followed by replacing wage loss and then repayment for pain and suffering. Yet your budget actually reduces the amount on spending.

As you were describing, there are some places where you expect it to have savings to keep rehabilitation services at the proper level. How will your department assist the government's goal of placing the priority on rehabilitation for auto insurance?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — First of all, just once again, there have not been reductions in rehab services. If anything, there's been an increase in rehab services. And there is a potential for greater services if it's identified as a need within a district through the rural health initiatives fund of \$10 million.

As to The Automobile Accident Insurance Act, the impacts of that legislation aren't reflected in this budget for Health. However, the Department of Health and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) are having discussions and meetings on how to enhance programing with respect to The Automobile Accident Insurance Act and what we can do in the rehab area with respect to that particular legislation.

Now when that programing is put together, that would

be increased funding that the Department of Health needs and would receive from SGI.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. The budget for long-term care services, as you said, is going up 3.7 or 8 million dollars. How will that additional funding be spent?

(1515)

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The money that was put into long-term care is for the purposes of maintaining the status quo and I think almost completely goes into collective agreements with the long-term care sector employees.

Now the Health Services Utilization and Research Commission, if you haven't received a copy of "A Closer Look" which is a publication by them, is very useful in determining where the long-term care system will be heading.

They did a very extensive report that indicates a number of things — that the system, for example, presently does not necessarily meet the needs of the high priority cases as quickly as it should. Because what was happening is that institution by institution, patients would be admitted to the institution. So heavy care patients were sometimes being overlooked by the institutions.

And what they've done in some of the districts, and I know that we will be urging all the districts to do this, is looking at a district-wide priority system where there's one list. And when an institution has a vacancy open, the person at the top of that list goes in.

So hopefully through health district boards we can coordinate that kind of service. And that was on the recommendation of the Health Services Utilization and Research Commission, and that is in the process of being implemented.

They have also stated that most level 2 clients, for example, can live independently with support from home care, and therefore suggested and were urging us to enhance home care funding, which we did, which we have done once again this year.

They are doing or there will be, in conjunction with district boards, a long-term plan put in place for long-term care within the concept of a district. What we need to do is use the beds that we have there more effectively. Their title, for example, on this is: fewer beds, better priority system needed in Saskatchewan's long-term care sector.

So the Department of Health, in conjunction with the district health board, in conjunction with the district health board and the utilization commission will be implementing some of these recommendations. And I have an extra copy here which I'll send over to you.

But there will be long-term plans for the long-term care sector in every district, and that's the game that we are . . . that's the plan that we are moving towards.

The purpose is, is to use home care and community-based services as much as we can; use the beds there that we have as effectively as we can; and make sure that those people with the greatest needs are looked after first.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you for that. Does this budget include capital spending for long-term care facilities?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Yes, there is some long-term care capital funding, and I'll just go through the list with you.

The La Ronge hospital will be an integrated facility, so there will be some long-term care in there. And this hospital was considered a priority because, as the member will recall, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, because of complaints that were coming out some time ago, had investigated that situation and recommended that there be new hospital construction in La Ronge and that it was fairly urgent. You may or may not recall that, but it came about two or three years ago, I guess — maybe three years ago now, the investigation took place.

The other long-term care facility that is being constructed is at the Foyer at Gravelbourg, and that became a fairly urgent matter because the fire regulations were being breached in there and there was some . . . a great deal of concern being expressed — not a hospital, a long-term care facility.

Moose Jaw and P.A. (Prince Albert) are the other two areas where there will be money go into capital for long-term care because in both Moose Jaw and P.A. we have moved from two hospitals to one; and in order to do that, there is certain construction that has to take place in order to accommodate moving from two hospitals to one hospital. So in both of those cities we have funding for long-term care renovations or capital construction.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could you give me the amounts that will be going in this budget into those cities?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — These are estimates. And in '94-95 the La Ronge integrated facility is 5 million; Gravelbourg Foyer is 4 million; Moose Jaw is 9.6 million; Prince Albert is 2.2 million. But I must indicate these are estimates and that is only what will be paid in '94-95.

The total cost, in the same order, is La Ronge, 14 million; Gravelbourg, 8.5 million; Moose Jaw, 23.5 million; and Prince Albert, 9 million. The provincial share is a portion of that, because there is always a sharing from the local communities.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. The budget for home-based and community service has gone up \$3.8 million which is an increase of 7 per cent. Your government invented the wellness model of health care and has placed the emphasis on community-based health care, as you've described for us. How has this increase in spending made it

possible to reduce spending in acute and long-term care?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — The acute care funding, as you know, has been decreased by 2.8 per cent this year, and in the year before and the year before that, approximately 2.5 each year, on the average. That comes to approximately \$46 million. So with a 50 per cent increase in home care, over a period of three years, we have been able to deal with patients much more in the home than the way they were dealt with in the past, and there's been much more of a move to day surgery.

Now all those savings in the acute care sector have not just been realized in shorter hospital stays, but there have been administrative cuts in the acute care sector as well, and other reorganization in hospitals themselves, you know, in terms of looking for savings. We've been urging health boards to look for savings as much as they can in other areas, as opposed to simply moving . . . shorter hospital stays and so on.

So there has been a saving of some \$46 million.

Now that's in actual dollars. Of course as we know, the health care system, the rate of inflation has been 7 or 8 per cent on average in the past and it's been as much as 10 or 13 per cent. And in provinces where reductions weren't put in initially, the years that we were reducing, those increases were there. So even though we've reduced it by 2.8 per cent, if you take the inflation rate into consideration, it's a larger reduction.

So there's been a tremendous amount achieved by home care in this regard. But there's more that can be done by home care — much, much more. We increased it over a period of three years by — what was the percentage? — \$14 million, almost 50 per cent over a period of three years.

We did it in this staged fashion in order for home care to be able to develop its programs gradually as opposed to getting the 50 per cent in the first year, for example. We were concerned that they may not be able to cope with that large of an increase and get the programs in place and make them effective enough. So it was done over a period of time and we'll continue to move in that direction as we evolve more services to the community.

The other provinces are following suit now. We're witnessing this across Canada in terms of developing more community-based services, more home care, looking after people as much as we possibly can in their homes instead of in an institution, not just because it's more cost-effective, but also because in many cases it's a better quality of care because they're better off in their homes instead of being in a facility. And many patients are indicating that they prefer, for example, to stay in their home if that is possible.

So there have been savings generated, but we have done it very slowly unlike some other jurisdictions that have cut the health care budget much, much,

much greater in a shorter period of time. We have attempted to do this over a longer period of time, to do it more slowly, to do it with a plan, to do it with a direction that's being set out; and to nevertheless make the system more affordable, make it more efficient, and still maintain quality services.

And I think when health reform has been much more complete than it is right now that we will see a definite improvement in the quality of services because we'll be able to concentrate on delivering more appropriate services in our community and in our homes.

Mrs. Bergman: — Madam Minister, the rural health initiatives fund is the funding allocated to implement the new rural health board concept. Is that correct? How will the money devoted to that fund be spent?

(1530)

Hon. Ms. Simard: — There has been 7 million that has already been allocated to the districts. And the purpose of this money is to make sure that services are available and programing as necessary for the residents of the district. It was allocated on a population basis to the various districts.

There's another 3 million that's available for province-wide initiatives. And as needs are identified by districts and any suggestions come forward as to what sort of programing is required in a particular area, the department will move to make this funding available for the district boards.

It's to help them to enhance services in their districts, to make sure that the needs of the population are being met, and to put in . . . It could amount, for example, to enhanced emergency response or it could be palliative care . . . well palliative has already been built into the budget. Home renal dialysis, for example; a home renal dialysis program in the district. If it's needed.

So a needs assessment has to be done. And if that's the kind of program that would be valuable in that particular district because there are people who need it and would access it, then they should present their suggestions and their recommendations to the Department of Health, and that's what that 3 million will be spent for.

The palliative care is in the present budget, is it not? That was my mistake; I'm sorry. As you are aware, the Government of Saskatchewan has announced a province-wide palliative care program, which will be the first of its kind. And there is already funding allocated in the district budgets to set up a palliative care program in their district and in each of the communities.

Mrs. Bergman: — So the palliative care funding is separate from the rural health initiatives fund. Okay.

What is the difference between the health organizations and services subprogram and the rural health initiatives subprogram?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Okay, the health organizations and services are a number of third-party organizations that get funding from government. For example, Camp Easter Seal, Continuing Nursing Education, Saskatchewan Alzheimer Association, Canadian Blood Agency, Personal Care Home Assessment, Canadian Transplant — I'm not reading them all out — but Canadian Transplant society, Catholic Health organization, Lions Eye Bank of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Health-Care Auxiliaries Association, and so on. It's a whole list of other organizations that receive funding from government.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could I have a copy of that list?

The Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation is receiving an increase of two and a half million, which is an increase of 15 per cent. How will the additional funding be spent? What programs, what equipment, what maintenance?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Yes, in the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation we have, as I'm sure you are aware, expanded the breast cancer screening program so it covers the entire province, and that is some \$432,000. Now women anywhere in the province, because we do have some mobile units for farther regions, can access breast cancer screening.

There has been some capital equipment replacement funding which is 1.79 million and that is for expensive radiation therapy equipment for the cancer foundation's clinics. This funding, I should point out, is part of the multimillion 7.9 million funding package that I announced on December 14, 1993. The money will be used to buy four pieces of specialized radiation therapy equipment for the foundation's clinics in Regina and Saskatoon. This equipment was long overdue and our government has steadily been attempting to upgrade the therapy equipment. So there is a \$7.9 million funding package and this is 1.79 million in this budget applied towards that package.

There was an in-scope salary adjustment of 112,000 and increased drug costs of 380,000 that were funded to the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation also found some efficiencies of 200,000 for a net increase of 2 million 514 or 15.54 per cent. And of course the reason for that is that our government understands the priority that Saskatchewan people put on cancer treatment.

And the members opposite there are shaking their head in the Tory bench. The fact is is they never put this equipment in when they were in government, and I can remember asking for them to do it and it just wasn't forthcoming.

But our government considers this a priority because we know Saskatchewan people, when they're facing the need for cancer treatment, are very anxious and we want to make sure that our equipment is updated. There's still more that has to be done, but we're

steadily working away at trying to solve some of the problems that were brought to our attention by the cancer foundation when we took over government.

Mrs. Bergman: — The Provincial Auditor expressed some concerns about the members of the foundation. Two have not been appointed as stipulated in the Act. Three members continued in office beyond the period allowed in the Act. I'm sure the minister responsible was aware of these concerns.

Who represents the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Cancer Society, and why has the member from the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Cancer Society not been formally appointed and has only been allowed to sit in the meetings as a non-voting member?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — I'm advised by my officials that because of the health reform that there was . . . they were holding back on making new appointments until we saw exactly how the cancer foundation fit into the picture. And it's also my understanding that they have been processing names for this appointment but there's been some paper backlog, but that it's on its way at this point. So I think the matter has been taken care of.

Mrs. Bergman: — How does your department supervise and monitor the operations of district health boards? What procedures are in place to share information, prevent duplicated effort, ensure value for money for all spending, and direct their efforts?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Structurally, the Department of Health has set up consulting teams for each district. So we have a consulting team for a particular district and they work with the district on a regular basis — virtually daily, is it not? — on a daily basis with training and financing, and they share information with the district and require the district to share information with us.

If there is something that we feel we need a report on, the consulting team will ask for a report and the district will provide it. So there is a constant contact between the district board and the department consulting team. So they're working together through this period of transition.

The district boards have also . . . are required to be accountable to their districts. And I outlined at the beginning of Health estimates a number of ways that that accountability is required.

They're asked also to implement standards of care in service delivery. The standards that have been set out, for example, are articulated in legislation that's there — Hospital Standards Act and regulations, Housing and Special-Care Homes Act and regulations, The Ambulance Act and regulations, home care policy manuals, and so on. So there's a whole range of standards and regulations that were in place before health reform and are still in place today, that district boards have to meet.

And so they consult with us if they have any difficulty in implementing some of the regulations and we check to make sure that the regulations and legislation is being fulfilled, and to make sure that there's an adequate level of service throughout the province in all areas where the standards are stipulated.

And as I pointed out, there is the accountability of district health boards to their district with public health meetings, and the need at one of these meetings to table an annual . . . a budget and a plan for the next fiscal year, as well as to report on the health status of the population.

So there's information not just going between district and government, but also from district to the population and the citizens of the district, getting their input into the process as well. I feel very positive about that development because, as you know, hospital boards in the past and other health care boards have not had to have public meetings. In fact one of the criticisms I used to receive as opposition Health critic all the time was that people couldn't access information from hospitals.

And so this is an attempt to remedy that and make sure that information is available to the public and for the public to have some input. And I think that that's a positive development for Saskatchewan people.

(1545)

The board also has to provide the Minister of Health in advance of each fiscal year with a detailed estimate expenditures of the board and the sources of any revenues and estimated revenue — for example, from donations or whatever — and the details of any proposed services or activities.

So the district boards have to submit to the minister an indication of its expenditures and its revenues in advance of each fiscal year. They also have to report on an annual basis to the minister on the board's services and activities and their costs and provide audited financial statements. The minister may request from time to time continued separate reporting on a quarterly basis — health outcome measurements, for example. Because one of the goals of health reform is not simply to deliver a health service but to look at health outcomes.

Now the concept of looking at health outcomes has existed in the health care sector before but has not really been implemented by governments. We have simply funded on the basis of the level of funding that was provided the year before and increased it and increased it.

We are now asking people to look at population needs and health outcomes so that we target our money to those people who have the greatest need and those locations in the province where there is the greatest need. And we look at whether or not the health care funding is resulting in healthier people and healthier communities. That's what outcomes are all about.

So the boards will be asked to communicate with us on health outcome measurements and improvement in the health of district residents. That's very important because we want to make sure that our funding is being targeted to services that are resulting in healthier people. So there's a great . . . I could go on at length but I know the member will have more questions so . . . I can, however, offer to provide you with more information on that whole area.

But there is a mechanism for a lot of input between government and districts and district and the public, and in fact on a quarterly basis, my senior officials and myself and the Associate Minister of Health meet with the district boards, the chair, and the CEOs (chief executive officer) of the district board. The Health department officials at the senior level meet with them on an even more frequent basis. And then we have our consulting teams that are in constant contact with them, virtually on a daily basis. So there is a real structure for this kind of input amongst all the players in the system.

Mrs. Bergman: — Madam Minister, I'd be interested in any information that you can give to me to outline that process, as you outlined it.

You speak of the district health boards being accountable to the public. In what way are they accountable except in handing information on? What if the public is not satisfied with the job that that district board is doing? In what way are they accountable to them there?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Well clearly if the public is not satisfied with the way the district board is handling it, that will be brought to our attention and we will take a look at the matter and see if there's some way of it being resolved. Where any local person has a complaint about what the district board is doing, first of all they should go to the district board. And if they're not satisfied with the communications with the district board then they should contact the Department of Health or people in my office, and we will take a look at the situation and see what the problem is and whether there is anything that we can do about it. That's the way we are going to handle it during this transition period.

Ultimately, however, the boards will move to election, and then they will be accountable through the election process. However, that still . . . there will still be problems. And there again, the proper method is to go to the district board, try and get it resolved through the district board, and if that doesn't work, to contact the Department of Health and we'll work with the district board. Because elections will not solve a lot of the problems that will come up in a district because people don't necessarily like the decisions that . . . if it doesn't go their way, they may not like the decision. And maybe it wasn't a good decision, but maybe it was. And so the Department of Health would then take a look at that, to see whether there's something that can be done.

In the past, in the past with hospital boards, for

example, what would happen if somebody didn't like something that happened in a hospital? They would complain to the hospital board, and if they felt dissatisfied, they complained to the government. So it hasn't changed in that regard.

If anything has changed, we're making it more accountable because now these boards have to open up their books; they have to open up their process; they have to provide information — they couldn't even get the information before — now the boards have to provide the information to the public. And there will be the election process to also increase that accountability that much more.

So the Minister of Health of course is ultimately responsible for all provincial standards and for monitoring the district boards and making sure that the district boards implement provincial standards. That's the ultimate responsibility of the Minister of Health and the Department of Health, and that responsibility remains there.

Mrs. Bergman: — We are looking forward to those elections. Describe the spending, please, for the district health board officials. What was the total spending and what type of fee or stipend is paid to board officials?

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Thank you. We do not have an audited figure of how much has been spent at this point, but we're trying to get that information together.

There were certain rates that were established in conjunction with government remuneration for jobs of this responsibility. Some of the boards implemented those rates. They were maximum rates. Some chose to forego some of the funding but others have taken the full amount, so it varies from district to district is what I am saying.

For health district boards the chairperson gets \$235 per diem and a member gets \$155 per diem. There's a retainer for the chair of 5,000. And in Regina and Saskatoon, because of their huge budgets, which are approximately 250 million, you have the chairperson getting 525 per diem and a member getting 300 per diem, with a retainer for the chair of 10,000. But as I pointed out, it's my understanding that these rates have not necessarily been invoked in each and every district.

I don't know what the total cost is at this point. I have asked the Department of Health to monitor it and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations to monitor it, and look at ways that we can ensure that the costs are maintained.

We have to remember, when we look at municipal employees' remuneration and school board trustees' remuneration, that these health budgets are in some cases bigger than the municipal budgets in that particular area. These are large budgets, particularly in Regina and Saskatoon and some of the other cities in the province.

They are providing a very comprehensive range of services, not just hospitals. In the past you would have a hospital board and all they would be doing was administering the hospital. They will be administering all the hospitals, special care homes, home care, public health, mental health, addictions counselling, and all sorts of other programming within the district. So it's quite different, the level of responsibility that the boards are taking on and their mandate.

And during this transition I am not sure just how much time is being spent on the transition in terms of coordinating and integrating. There's a lot of work going into getting the system organized because they're not simply walking in and taking over a hospital. They have to coordinate all the services, they have to develop a plan; they are being asked to consult with the community; they're being asked to have public meetings with the community.

They are doing much, much, much more than the board officials of the other 400 boards did because their responsibility is so much more comprehensive. Now in the past it was a million dollars, or close to a million in terms of per diems for the 400 boards, plus expenses — meals and travelling expenses. And I don't know what the total cost was of the past 400 boards because we don't know what the full extent of their costs were.

And that is without having to do the kind of coordination and integration and planning and public consultation that we're asking these board members to do in order to move through the transition in terms of health reform.

I have asked the Department of Health and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) to keep the cost down as much as possible and to do what they can to make sure those costs are kept down, but I don't have a sum at this point as to exactly how much it is and whether or not we can make any sort of a comparison.

I don't have that information but I am hoping that we will be able to provide more information to the legislature in the months to come on that issue. Thank you.

Mrs. Bergman: — A per diem of \$150 per day seems like a lot of money to spend for a board. In fact, you say some boards . . . are there some boards that don't take any per diems? Is it possible you would be able to attract interested and informed citizens to sit on those boards and do that work which you have outlined as being very rigorous work, if the per diem were halved or eliminated? Are there people who would be willing to do this work? And also, are the board officials allowed expense allowance beyond this per diem?

(1600)

Hon. Ms. Simard: — First of all, I want to point out that these rates are maximum rates. Some boards have taken less. Boards also have the right to set expenses at the government rate, and there again it's the same

scenario — some boards set it at the government rate, some less.

Now we have been told by the president of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, who is a rural member, that reducing this compensation would not be advisable. The reason being that we are requiring farmers and small-business people and professional people to take time off work to do this work.

I'm just corrected here — the chairman of SAHO, not the president. That this compensation in some cases is hardly adequate at \$155 a day to get a lawyer or professional person or a farmer or a small-business person to take off a day or two, and maybe several in the course of a month, to do this work. So that point of view has been raised to us.

However, there has also been the point that we shouldn't be compensating people who are already on a fixed salary to do this work. And that's one of the issues that we're taking a look at right now and having discussions with SAHO and board members and others.

So this is a flexible thing. We are looking at the issue as to whether or not this is fair for a farmer or a small-business man to take a day off, and sometimes it's at very crucial times; or whether somebody on fixed income should be getting a per diem on top of it. It's one of the things that's under review.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move we report progress.

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and your officials, to the deliberations this afternoon. A couple questions that just came my way, basically through a phone call this afternoon.

Mr. Minister, what process does the department go through in determining an applicant's application for assistance under Social Services? And what avenue do they follow up to determine whether or not individuals are . . . one of the major concerns I guess that continues to be raised is the people that may or may not be deriving income on the side and never claiming the income, possibly just working on a cash basis for small amounts. In some cases that can be fairly large unless . . . although I would suspect that if anyone, especially a farmer or businessman isn't going to want to pay out a fairly large wage without having some form of tax incentive created through it or derived from it.

So, Mr. Minister, what I'd like to know is, number one, what process does a person follow in applying? And what format does the department have in place right now to follow up on applicants to make sure that the individuals who are receiving assistance actually deserve it and are people that certainly fall within the

guidelines and have no other source of income; therefore they have come to the department looking for assistance?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Initially an applicant has to, on a prescribed form, make an application for social assistance on one side of the form. I believe you flip it over, and then you make a declaration — which is a sworn declaration, which is sworn to and notarized — identifying your income, your expenses, your assets. And then there are verifications required, verifications for income, rent. We also then do computer matches with Health, UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) and so on. That's basically the process.

The theory of course is that when you sign a declaration indicating that that is your situation, then you swear to those circumstances . . . is it notary or commissioner of oaths, I guess — commissioner of oaths, which the workers are. Then that is considered to have a legal status as the declaration of your circumstances.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, if a person finds that they've contacted a representative from Social Services and they feel that they don't seem to be getting anywhere, they may feel that they're not being represented fairly or that their claim has been . . . I guess one Social Services counsellor might say no, you don't have a claim coming or you're not eligible. Is there is another format that people can approach or go through to try and bring out the concerns they have and the fact that they've come with a legitimate request for some assistance?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — There are essentially three levels of appeal that people have; basically, they can appeal if they're not satisfied. They can appeal to the local regional director, they can appeal to the local appeal committee, and also to the provincial appeal committee.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, one of the questions I guess that continually arises is people on social assistance or on very minimal income that come for social assistance, if they have some income, generally it seems to me that if they've got even a certain number of hours in, should they if they require . . . And under social assistance they would be . . . Let's say a family of four would receive an allotment, and I'm guessing at numbers right now because I don't have them all in my head, but say around 1,150 a month, but they can find a job that for part of the month that would maybe pay them \$400. And in a lot of cases, generally speaking, once you get some kind of revenue and looks like it's almost full-time employment, you're discontinued or cut off of social assistance.

Is the department looking at any way of supplementing rather than forcing these people just to not look for work at all, because \$400 a month isn't a substantial amount to even try to exist on.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, actually there are approximately 5,500 people, our clients who are on

assistance, were working either full or part time and having their assistance being . . . or having their income being supplemented by assistance, which is consistent with what I think the notion of your question was.

You're talking about the wage exemption provision which allows people to keep a certain amount of money before they start losing . . . before they start losing that money, as a financial incentive to being better off working than you are on assistance.

Also the Family Income Plan which is a tool that interests the federal government in the federal reform initiatives and which interests some other provinces in terms of a tool. The Family Income Plan is designed to supplement low income, working families, again I think consistent with what you're recommending.

Mr. Toth: — One other question, Mr. Minister, and before I turn it over to my colleague. A call I just received about an individual looking for work, had an opportunity for work in Manitoba, and by the time he was able to get over to the job opportunity, the job went elsewhere. The feeling was also, if he would have taken the job, with the minimal amount and housing . . . Since he was living in Saskatchewan, he came back and applied for social assistance, and at the present time has been turned down.

Now when the department is viewing a situation where a person has applied for a job, possibly a job is available, and yet at \$5 an hour — and I'm not exactly sure how many hours this person may have been able to work, whether it was an eight-hour day or what — but just at the end of the day, there wasn't a lot left to try and commute back and forth to Brandon to find a place to stay through the week.

Is there any avenue a person could pursue, or does the department do whatever it can to help people get on their feet and get involved in a job, versus just staying on social assistance?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well first of all, what we try to do on a general basis, is to explore with any of our clients their ability, their interest in pursuing education, training, employment options. And then of course in the case like you're talking about, which might include a position in another province, with a confirmation that there is a job there that that person can go to, we often through special needs, provide the person with a bus ticket and meals and means to get there to take on a specific job, and at times even specific boots or clothing that might be required if it's an outside job in the winter and so on, to take the position. So we can provide special needs around transportation or clothing, or so on, to a confirmed job.

I might say though, I think you raise a good point in terms of interprovincial opportunities. This, I think, is something we've sort of worked out with other jurisdictions and we try — if people go to a confirmed job in another province — we try and . . . and they've been on assistance say in Saskatchewan, we try and

establish them on their first month in, say, Alberta or Manitoba. And then if they require additional support once they're working there, then they can go in there and see about additional support.

And this works the same way if people come here. It's kind of the interprovincial agreement that we have.

But I think that this makes the federal income review reform initiative very timely and important to look at this kind of consideration, particularly with some high unemployment rate areas where people may have to be doing more interprovincial travel. And so I think that we clearly have that issue on the agenda for our federal-provincial discussions.

(1615)

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I guess the last time you and I was visiting we got into probably more of a debate than a question-and-answer period. And I, in thinking about it afterwards, decided that maybe I would try to get into a question-and-answer scenario rather than a debate.

An Hon. Member: — He realized that he was right and you were wrong.

Mr. Britton: — Yes, my colleague says never worry about the fact that I was right and you were wrong all the time.

Anyway, Mr. Minister, one of the two, three things that I wanted to clear up before we go into some of the more general questions and that was, as I said, I got the impression from you that you felt that I was down on anyone that was on social assistance. And I think you got the impression from me that I didn't believe anybody was trustworthy and all that sort of thing.

Well I never was and never will be against people who need assistance. I go back a few years and I can remember being what is called poor today. So I do understand.

The other thing we talked about, and you said something to the effect that we can't have it both ways. Well I think what I was trying to suggest to you, Mr. Minister, was that we could get closer to having it both ways if we were able to clean up the errors and the abuses that maybe were out there, and then we'd have more money or more assistance to give to those who probably could use a bit more. And some of the people in your department, as I mentioned, Mr. Minister, agrees with what I am saying because they talked to me about it.

And that brings me up to another question. You asked if I would release the letters that I had, to you, and I have to suggest, Mr. Minister, that there's one that I maybe will and can if I get permission. The others, I gave my word that I wouldn't do that. And that also brought up, I think, something you said about making it awfully difficult in your job when we get these kinds of information and can't follow it up, and I appreciate

your position because I'm in the same position.

The other thing . . . Oh yes, Mr. Minister, I would like to thank you for sending over the answers to the global questions which will help us expedite our visit tonight. And what I did then after thinking over, I made a list, a general list of the questions that I wanted to ask you, and so that we could get into what this is supposed to be, is a question-and-answer period.

So I know you're going to want to come back at me a little bit so before I ask the first question, I'll let you respond, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well thank you very much, to the hon. member. What I would say is, where I would suggest we leave it is that we both agree that we are responsible to ensure that there's a proper accountability for expenditures of taxpayers' money. And I suppose where we disagreed up to this point is whether your administration or our administration — who was the most accountable? But I think in the final analysis we'll let the Provincial Auditor decide that in his next report, whether he's satisfied that we've got the proper controls.

I also appreciate you clarifying your position. I think we both agree that it's important to respect and to enhance the dignity of those people who are on assistance at this point in time, and that what they really need are meaningful jobs and opportunities to provide for their families and to become financially independent; and that it's our responsibility to work together to try and ensure that that happens.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. Make sure that just before we get into what might be construed as a love-in here, I would like to agree with you, sir, that thank goodness — thank goodness — the majority of those folks are honest. Because if we had something like, I think you told me, a little over 82,000 people and if they weren't honest, most of them, you and I both would be in a pretty tough spot. So now that the amenities are over, Mr. Minister, I would you to get your flak jacket on and get your hard hat and all those things.

I would like to go into your computer report that you were kind enough to send over, Mr. Minister, and I would like to . . . and I've gone over a few of the questions and the ones I want to ask you about. On page 1, the department spent over \$6,000 on what is called printer cartridges and ribbons. Now this seems like a lot for just a common stationery supply. Can you provide us with more detail about how many of those were purchased?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'm sorry. I didn't hear exactly what you wanted to know — how many of what were purchased?

Mr. Britton: — On page 1, you spent \$6,000 on printer cartridges and ribbons. Could you tell me how many of each of those were . . .

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'm advised that we don't have

the actual number, but that's for the entire computer system of the department and that most of those are recycled and used again. So I'm not able to answer that question.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, that's probably something you could later on send over, if you could. Yes.

And maybe this next question would be the same thing. On page 3, over \$8,000 was spent on laser cartridges. I'd like to know how many of them were purchased and the cost per unit. And I'm wondering if those, they must . . . the printer cartridge and the laser cartridge I suspect are different. I'm not much of a computer person, so are they two different kind of cartridges?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — To answer your question, they're about \$100 each, so \$6,000. But we'll provide you with the information, same on your last question, and a description of the differences of the two systems, and provide them in the next day or so, if that's okay.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, on pages 1, 3 and 5, there was 4,000 spent on keyboard drawers, and that seems like a lot for a common piece of furniture. Could you also let me know how many of those and were they all new, or did you replace existing keyboard drawers?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I am advised these are ergonomic drawers which fit onto the desks and sort of slide out so that they're at the proper height and so on, so they don't provide long-term strain on necks and joints and backs and so on, and so mainly for health reasons. We have 400 computer terminals, so we're adding some of these as we can afford them.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. I did ask if they were all new or were you replacing old ones?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, they're all new.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Also on page 3, you spent \$3,731.72 on WordPerfect. Mr. Minister, don't you get a WordPerfect in a package? Was this an upgrade? And how many copies of the site licence did you purchase for the same price?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — First of all, we recently upgraded the program from a 5.0 to a 5.1 program, which is a better program and allows us to do more with it. And you have to buy a package for each computer. In other words, due to copyright laws and so on, you have to do that with each one.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. I was kind of thinking that's what you were doing with this and I just wanted to get it clarified.

You also spent over \$6,000 on headsets . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I notice here that you have spent over \$6,000 on headsets. And how many were purchased?

And are these being used throughout the whole department, or just in a specific area such as processing claims?

And we recognize the value for reducing stress, but would you not say they're something of a luxury item? And I've noticed that very few, if any, other departments use them. Have you just purchased these lately, or is this something in your upgrading system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, these headsets are part of the ergonomic furniture used primarily by people who spend a lot of time on the phone in the social assistance program and who have to have their hands free to work on the keyboard. That's the main reason we've purchased those.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess that's acceptable.

On page 5, you spent, between two different line items, over \$16,000 on common computer office fixtures, and that's like anti-glare screens, anti-static wipers, more keyboard holders, power bars, mouse pads, etc. Did the department not have these items before? And it seems to me that a lot of them would ordinarily come with a computer package. And were they all new or were they replacements?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No, these are new purchases and these are of course part of the whole system that is having to be purchased everywhere where this technology is being used. We did not have these items before, and without these aids there would be new associated health problems, because people are spending long hours at the terminals.

And they're also part of the requirements under occupational health and safety for the amount of time that's being spent with this new technology. So it's a new system that we're adapting, evolving as we can reasonably afford to develop the integrated system.

(1630)

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then I'm to assume, Mr. Minister, that you probably had no choice but you had to buy that in order to upgrade and also meet the requirements in the health.

There's one other thing in the computer package that you gave me that — I don't know what page it would be on; it would be second last page — and the fourth item down, there was 46,852.95 spent. And in the tendered it says: yes-no. And further down there's another one that says yes, and that's for 30,000. Both of those are to increase productivity. Could you explain the yes-no part there, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'm advised that likely a portion of the purchase was too small to tender. But we'll get the breakdown and explain those two areas to you in the next day or so, if that's okay.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. I'm going to leave the computer part for

now. And I thank you for sending the information so we could just go through and find what we wanted to talk about and get it.

And the other global questions, I'd like to ask you . . . I'm looking through your . . . the ministerial assistants. And it seems to me that you have five. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I have three ministerial assistants and three secretaries in my ministerial office.

Mr. Britton: — Okay. Then, Mr. Minister, can you explain why in this package that you sent me I have five ministerial assistants listed here plus a secretary? And I'll just go through it with you, and maybe there's a reason for it or maybe you could help us get it figured out.

On page 35 we see ministerial assistant 4, James W. Balfour; ministerial assistant E, Judith Bergen. Then we find a secretary on 36, but we also find another ministerial assistant 2, Karen LaRocque; and on page 37 I find ministerial assistant C, Sarah McLean; and further down the page, ministerial assistant 2, Carolyn Rebeyka. Could you explain what . . . you say you have three; there's five listed.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, all of the names that you mentioned were for the previous minister. I believe you have a copy of . . . In my case currently, Julia Puff is my chief of staff; ministerial assistants: 1006, Beverley Cardinal, and Murray Gross — those are the three assistants, ministerial assistants. Shirley Richardson, Beverley Hewson, and Gloria Kups are the secretaries in the office. So six in total.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then, Mr. Minister, could you tell me what happened to those other people that are not now your ministerial assistants? What did they do?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — They have left for other opportunities, so I'm not aware of where they are. So sorry, I can't answer that.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, am I then to assume they were not discharged as far as you know? Or the previous minister moved them out before you came along?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — As far as I know they've gone to other positions elsewhere.

Mrs. Bergman: — Welcome, Mr. Minister, and your officials this afternoon.

First of all, I'd like to ask you some general administration questions. The total budget for the department is increasing by \$43 million, which is an increase of 9 per cent. That's a considerable increase and I would expect this has meant some considerable changes in operations in your department. What benefit will the people of Saskatchewan receive as a result of this increased spending, and what is the source of this additional spending? And what other

programs were sacrificed?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well first of all let me say that we have a detailed set of objectives, goals, and work plan we'd be happy to send over to you, if you like. As you know, I've shared a lot of information, our strategic plan and what not, with your leader in the past.

But to answer your question, the majority of the increase has been due to federal changes, changes in the unemployment insurance program last year. There will be new costs related to the recent federal budget and to the decision last year with regard to financial services to treaty families off reserve.

In terms of what programs may be affected negatively, there was also some enhanced program support, which results . . . some of that money results in or is directed to, for example, the new money, new funds, to the family and youth plan; new money towards family violence and primary prevention services for families; new money for . . . Included in there is the strategy, the 1.7 million strategy — going home, staying home; new infant day care spaces; and new family law initiatives, that is, the additional support to the Legal Aid Commission. Those are enhanced supports . . . enhanced initiatives, in addition to the two major reasons that I indicated before.

Mrs. Bergman: — Page 4 of the budget speech says:

Last year, almost \$18 million was saved by making common sense changes to the day to day operations of government.

This year, we will save an additional \$12 million.

That was the quote.

Could you please tell me where your department made savings last year, and where you intend to make savings this year? What was the decision process used to identify those savings? Were outside consultants used, efficiency audits performed, or any other method of identifying costing measures?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — First of all, in terms of how we make decisions, we've not used outside consultants. Most of our analysis is internal. It's ongoing, involving the regions in any ways in which we can save money and do things more efficiently.

Over the two years I believe the savings will be approximately \$220,000, and most of that comes from downsizes in the management system.

Mrs. Bergman: — Your total staff has been enlarged by about 59 full-time equivalent positions, but that's an overall total. How many employees have been hired in your department through the Public Service Commission in the past year?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — First of all, all of the hiring goes through the Public Service Commission. It's a large department and all the positions are hired in that way.

You mentioned the 59 positions — they were added due to the workload increases I talked of earlier and the 30 verification officers.

Mrs. Bergman: — Were all of these positions advertised publicly and where are the new positions to be located?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — In the last year, because it's a big department, we had some 500 new hirings or replacements of vacant positions. And we will, if it's okay, we'll send you over a computer list of all of those individuals, which includes where they are located. If that's okay.

Mrs. Bergman: — Were they all advertised publicly, all positions?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Virtually all of them were hired through competition. There may have been a very, very small percentage through bumping and this sort of thing, but the answer to your question is essentially yes.

Mrs. Bergman: — How many of these newly hired employees are classified as in scope; how many are in the M & P (management and professional), and which is out of scope, you know, out of the scope of the union?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Virtually all the hirings on this list are in scope. We only have, I believe, 161 out-of-scope positions in the entire department of about 2,000 employees. So 98, 99 per cent on the list that you'll get are in-scope employees.

Mrs. Bergman: — So how many of those would have been out of scope? How many would there have been?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We'll give you the list which indicates that. We can count them up here, but we're estimating about 10.

Mrs. Bergman: — I'm assuming that this list then would include a complete list of the transfers including employee name, department, old classification or title, new classification or title, and salary change if any. And that would be fine if you would include that.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — As I say, we'll send this over to you, but in a sense, the headings are — to answer your question — employee name, the working title, the class title, the work location, the reason for termination, and the date and the salary and the subvote.

In terms of where they came from, we would have to go over each one and sort of look it up; that is not on the computer printout here. But we, you know, you may . . . I'm not sure how important that is. You may want to . . . if you want to follow up, feel free to do that, but I don't have that on computer printout.

Mrs. Bergman: — We'll follow up then if we need further information. Did your department abolish any positions or terminate any staff in this last budget?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, in terms of deletions, we had four positions deleted due to early retirement, and seven positions deleted due to restructuring. And these were all management positions, not field.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could I have the same details on those as we were speaking of in the last question?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we'll send that over.

Mrs. Bergman: — Now I'd like to move to some of the subvotes. How many people are receiving social assistance today, and could you provide a breakdown of recipients by community, by age group, and by native, non-native descent? And I know it's asking a lot, but I intend to use the data.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That's several questions there. I'll try to answer them as best I can. We have just under 40,000 clients or 82,000 people in total. And we could send you over a breakdown of socio-economic demographics. Would by region be okay? We don't have them by community. We're not designed to have it that way. If by region would be okay, we could send those over. And then if you had any specific questions within each region, I'd be very happy to, or the officials, to sit down with you.

We have the number by treaty, and we also have an estimate of the constitutional status for other people. And we could send that information over. In fact I'm advised that virtually all of that information, or most of it, is in our quarterly statistical report which I could send over right now, if that's okay.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. The budget shows an increase of \$37.6 million or an increase of 14 per cent in SAP (Social Assistance Plan). Does this increase match the increase in demand? And how much of this increase is an adjustment for inflation, and how much is for new clients?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — The increase is totally related to volume. We have added . . . there is no factored increase for inflation at all in the 1994-95 budget.

Mrs. Bergman: — How many families will this affect, and what is the per capita increase among recipients?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — There were no benefit increases . . . there are no benefit increases in the budget; there's volume increases. And secondly, the number of families in the data around families is in that document that I gave you in terms of the breakdown of the different constellations and so on. And I might add just to clarify, that is as of December '93. So we can provide you with the next one which will be a little more current, yes.

Mrs. Bergman: — In contrast to that increase, the Family Income Plan is decreasing by 3.5 million or 39

per cent. I've spoken to quite a number of people who feel that in recent years this program has not been adequately advertised, or clients have not been given sufficient knowledge of the Family Income Plan, which to me seems, because it is a hedge against going on welfare, it seems there's some difficulty in why it's fallen so far.

How does this decrease affect your clients? Does it mean more people are on welfare when they don't get involved in the Family Income Plan? Are there other programs or other sources for clients to turn to besides SAP then?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — First of all, let me say that the Family Income Plan is a program that we're very proud of in terms of that being an important tool to complement and support the incomes of working families.

And I might add that the federal minister, Mr. Axworthy, likes that particular model, and a number of other provinces are looking at modelling that particular program as well.

So while we're proud of that as a tool, I would say that the program was badly neglected for many years and that there were no increases put into the program, so consequently the number of beneficiaries continue to fall because people . . . there wasn't enough money in the program to provide the additional support people needed.

Your relationship between that and the assistance program is right. More people, in fact, went onto assistance instead of being on the Family Income Plan.

Now that is a problem and a program that we're discussing with the federal government in terms of an enhanced Family Income Plan. The reality has been is that there just hasn't been enough money put into that over the years and we're trying to play catch-up as best we can.

We had a modest increase last year, as you recall, and we are hopeful that we will be able to negotiate some kind of an agreement with the federal government on that plan.

Mrs. Bergman: — It seems ironic though that there is a 39 per cent decrease in a plan that you see as very valuable, and I don't understand why this program was chosen to cut so deeply.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well I couldn't agree with you more. It is very ironic that we have this program here, which other provinces are trying to model and the federal government likes. But the reality is, due to the federal offloading, the unilateral federal offloading, we just have not been able . . . we've had to increase the budget to take care of the volume which has strapped our ability to enhance the programs and tools in a way that we would like to.

So I agree with you — it is very ironic. Now if you

could help me convince Mr. Axworthy and the federal government to reverse the treaty family offload, that would be \$20 million there that we could put some of that into the Family Income Plan. I agree with you.

If you could help me get the federal government to reverse the \$40 million they've taken out of the UIC program in the last federal budget, which is going to have an impact of 6 to 7 or \$8 million in terms of this year's budget, then we could enhance the Family Income Plan, which I would love to do. So I seek your support in helping us in those negotiations.

Mrs. Bergman: — So you're saying that the drop in this program was redirected to the SAP program?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No, we haven't consciously redirected money from the Family Income Plan to assistance at all. But what I'm saying is that there was no new money put into the Family Income Plan for so many years that what happened is that people had to sort of return to the SAP program in order to get their benefits. Last year we actually had more money in the Family Income Plan than was used, but we would love to enhance it if we were able to do that.

Mrs. Bergman: — I guess that's what I brought up first, that there is a sense amongst those who've worked in this area for years that in . . . For instance, last year when you didn't even use all the money in the program, that this program has been neglected even though it is, as you say, an admirable and imitable program, there seems to have been a fall-off in its . . . that doesn't seem always directly related to the money, in what you're saying.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well again, I mean I agree with you. The problem is that the new money to support people on assistance had to go into the SAP program. We didn't have the money to put into the FIP (Family Income Plan) program, so the FIP benefits are actually lower. If people just got FIP, it's not enough to live on, so they're required to get the support from the SAP program.

Now again I need your support. I need your support to negotiate with the federal government either to enhance the Family Income Plan or to reverse some of the offloading, the major offloading that has been done in the last year, including in the recent federal budget, which takes away from our ability to enhance the family income program. So I agree with you, but we require federal support to reverse the offloading in order to enhance the program.

The Chair: — Order. It being 5 o'clock, the committee stands recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.