

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new petition to present today, so I'll read it to the Assembly.

To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled, the petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That the Saskatchewan businesses are already facing great challenges as a result of government action, including increased costs because of increased taxation, utility rate increases, increased fees and rates, and changes to The Workers' Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Acts; and are facing losses to sales as a result of an increased sales tax and a declining population; and whereas the proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32, and The Trade Union Act, Bill 54, would greatly increase the cost to businesses and taxpayers and decrease employment opportunities for those who seek to work in the province.

Wherefore, your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to delay passage of the proposed amendments, Bill 32 and 54, until further amendments can be made and until all final regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are also fully detailed as a result of proper consultation with the business community.

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

And I'm happy to present these and lay them on the Table for the business community today, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Regulations

Clerk: — The Special Committee on Regulations, chaired by Mr. Toth, presents its third report of the committee which is hereby tabled and will be printed in today's *Votes and Proceedings*.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I move that the third report of the Special Committee on Regulations be concurred in, I'd like to make a few comments. I'd like to let the Assembly know that since its last report on June 15, 1993, your committee has held meetings on February 1, '94 and May 17, '94, and hereby submits its third report.

Mr. Speaker, your committee examined all regulations and amendments to regulations made in 1993 to determine whether they should be brought to the attention of the Assembly on any of the following grounds: (a) that it imposes a charge on the public revenues or prescribes a payment to be made to any public authority not specifically provided for by the statute; (b) that it is excluded from challenge in the courts; (c) that it makes unusual or unexpected use of powers conferred by statute; (d) that it purports to have retrospective effect where the parent statute confers no express authority so to provide; (e) that it has been insufficiently promulgated; and (f) that it is not clear in meaning.

Your committee is pleased to note that the outstanding issues and concerns pertaining to the following regulations have been resolved to your committee's satisfaction and, Mr. Speaker, I just bring to your attention regulations of 1991 and 1993 regulations. There's a number, and I won't take the time of the Assembly to read through them all.

Your committee continues to seek satisfactory resolution to its concerns with respect to issues relating to the following regulations: 1986, the regulations on mental health; '88 regulations, water power amendment and real estate brokers; and 1990 regulations, '91 regulations, and '93 regulations.

Your committee has reviewed all the by-laws and amendments to by-laws of professional associations tabled in the Assembly to ensure that each has proper legislative authority and is in the public interest.

Your committee is pleased to note that the issues and concerns pertaining to the following by-laws have been resolved to your committee's satisfaction. Your committee as well continues to seek satisfactory resolution on some matters of concern with respect to the following by-laws. And there are three by-laws here that we're following up on and will continue to monitor.

Your committee is pleased to note that the following by-laws have been enacted to the satisfaction of the committee and are hereby ratified and confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, we want to acknowledge the assistance of the Clerk's office and legal counsel in our deliberations, and we express our gratitude and thanks to these offices. And I want to express my appreciation to all committee members for their due diligence and hard work.

And therefore I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the third report of the Special Committee on Regulations be concurred in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 27 grade 4 students from W.F. Ready School in the constituency of Wascana Plains. They're in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'm looking forward to meeting with them on the steps for a picture and room 218 for questions and a drink. Accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Ready, and chaperons Mrs. Klein and Mrs. Sawchyn.

I'd ask all members to join with me in giving them a warm welcome to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly today a very special group of people in your gallery. They are known as Women of the Dawn because they believe that it is time to wake up and deal with today's very serious problems.

They have enjoined in membership with some, I think approximately 200, other women to battle poverty in their Regina neighbourhood. And these women are working to establish a community centre for women and children living in poverty.

The Women of the Dawn present today, would you please stand and be recognized by members of the Legislative Assembly. Thank you for coming.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce on behalf of the member from Nipawin some students and chaperons from Shoal Lake School in the Nipawin constituency. Mr. Speaker, along with the 10 students are the teacher, Daryl Steward, and chaperons, Lora Wakefield and Eric and Laura Lathlin and Steven Head.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words in our language.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the House to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Science Fair Winners

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to inform the House about the success that some Saskatchewan students achieved at the Canada-wide science fair this past weekend in Guelph, Ontario.

Three Saskatchewan students won honourable mentions; seven won bronze; four won silver; and six won various special awards. This amount of success has never before been achieved by Saskatchewan students at the fair.

Provincially Saskatchewan did well but it was the region of Saskatoon that did exceptionally well. Three outstanding projects by students from Saskatoon region received recognition at the Canada-wide science fair. Ian Thompson, a student at Caswell School, won a bronze medal for a display on the effects of water on seedling survival and seed germination. Justin Potter, a student from Rocanville, also won a bronze medal for an exhibit on environmentally-friendly road salt. Amit Gupta and Bahrad Sokhansanj, students from Marion Graham School, won a silver medal for a computer model of the human ear. A student from my constituency, Mr. Speaker, in Bruno, Jason Leuschen, was chosen to be part of team Canada along with 25 to 30 other students; Jason experimented with artificial intelligence.

These students from Saskatchewan that went to this competition all won their regional science fairs before going to Guelph. They were competing against 400 other projects and over 500 other students from across Canada. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the winners and all the other contestants from Saskatchewan for their fine showing.

Mr. Speaker, success is an attitude, and our students have again proven that Saskatchewan produces top-quality personnel, and that this is the attitude and the talent that will carry Saskatchewan to a successful future. Thank you very much.

National Missing Children's Day

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today — May 25 — marks the third annual green ribbon of hope campaign commemorating National Missing Children's Day. I'm proud to take part in the green ribbon campaign and commend Child Find Saskatchewan for again participating in this national program. And my heart goes out to those parents with missing children.

And, Mr. Speaker, that was brought home very vividly to us in recent months with the Leier family from Sedley and their son being missing. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they did locate their son; however their son had already been deceased. But they at least knew and know where their son is. Many people and many parents don't have that privilege and continue to suffer. The suffering never ends for these parents, their family, and their friends, and our hearts go out to them.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that despair does not overtake hope. Green is the colour of hope, and the ribbons that we wear epitomize the pursuit for missing children and their safe return to the arms of their family. On behalf of the official opposition, I wish Child Find Saskatchewan the very best today on

Missing Children's Day. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Missing Children's Month

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the green ribbon of hope represents a missing child in Canada. It is the symbol for National Missing Children's Day and for Missing Children's Month. They bring attention to a tragic fact of Canadian life.

In 1993, Mr. Speaker, there were 55,000 cases of missing children reported to law enforcement agencies in Canada: runaways, parental abductions, and other lost children. Fortunately most of these children are recovered quickly and without harm. Unfortunately some are not. It is for those that we observe this day.

It also allows us the opportunity to acknowledge and commend the work of Child Find Canada and Child Find Saskatchewan, the voluntary organizations that are most closely associated with missing children. We are all familiar with the pictures of children placed in public places; that is part of their work. Child Find also works closely with law enforcement and other agencies throughout the world to find and return missing children. And it gives awareness and education programs which alert parents and helps streetproof children.

Mr. Speaker, there are some facts we would rather hide from. I congratulate Child Find for its work in not letting us forget there are children still missing from home. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Visit From Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we were honoured to be introduced to members of the international Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development. This world-renowned organization has recognized the province's efforts in support of children at risk, and we are pleased to welcome them.

Today they are in Saskatoon. Tomorrow the team of Jennifer Evans and Josette Combes will visit a unique community in Prince Albert which is in the forefront on our attempt to improve the lives of children at risk. The West Flat area is grappling with the challenges of low income, transient population and very high enrolments at the elementary school level.

Tomorrow our visitors from Europe will be shown how, rather than submit to these issues as problems of urban living, the West Flat Citizens Group has come together with the school and with government departments to improve the life of the community for both students and parents. Involving all residents in the planning, the West Flat Citizens Group has developed a series of initiatives which involve a

housing program, day care and preschool programs, parent support groups, supervision programs and education programs for both children and adults.

Sask Housing, the city of Prince Albert, the departments of Education, Training, and Employment; Health, and Social Services have all been cooperating with the local citizens group. The West Flat Citizens Group and their activities are worthy of study by the OECD and they deserve praise and congratulation from all of us for being selected for observation by this international Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour Legislation

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 500 business people from the Saskatoon area gathered last night to protest the provincial government's Draconian labour legislation. This kind of event just doesn't happen all that often, Mr. Speaker. In fact one spokesman called this meeting a first in history.

Mr. Speaker, these are successful business people who pay attention to their environment and follow the government very closely. Last night they listened intently to several speakers, including a respected labour lawyer who briefed them on the contents and the effects of The Labour Standards Act and The Trade Union Act. Think of it, Mr. Speaker: 500 business people in one room, fully briefed on the government's labour laws, the Labour minister's worst nightmare.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Churchill Downs. Mr. Minister, you are quite fond of claiming that businesses will fully support your government once they understand the contents of your Bills. Well it appears that once again you're wrong, dead wrong. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan businesses and employers from around this province said no to you and to your Bills. And there are no further excuses . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Does the member have a question? Would the member put his question, please.

Mr. Goohsen: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. There are no further excuses for you, none. Will you now admit that the Saskatchewan small-business and employers' community do not support your initiatives?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — As a group, I don't think I ever claimed that the small-business community did support these amendments. That I think would be an unrealistic expectation, particularly given the misinformation which members opposite convey and some of the misinformation they had last night. I'm not suggesting anyone was being dishonest, but some of

the comments I heard about the legislation clearly are simply not factual.

We continue to believe, Mr. Speaker, that once the Bills are in operation, once the effect and the detail of the legislation is known, it will be about as controversial next year at this time as workers' compensation and occupational health and safety are this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — There were a number of resolutions passed last night, and I'd like to read you one:

Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan government delay passage of Bills 32 and 54 until further amendments can be made and until all final regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are fully detailed as a result of proper consultation with the business community.

This resolution, Mr. Minister, was passed unanimously. Mr. Minister, very simply: would you adhere to the wishes of the business and employer community, the very people who create the jobs that you were elected to protect? Will you delay passage of Bill 32 and 54 until all final regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are fully detailed as a result of proper consultation with the business community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To delay passage until there is complete agreement on something this controversial is a prescription for doing nothing, and I think that is probably realized by some of the people who put that comment forward. That in fact is what they hope to see accomplished.

Some of the people who were there clearly do not support the legislation. It is the role of paid lobbyists to extract every concession they can. And some of the people who were there at the meeting last night are doing exactly that; they are extracting every conceivable concession. And that's fair enough. That's their role.

One should keep in mind what they say after the legislation is passed. What they said last year after workers' compensation and occupational health and safety were passed is: we didn't do too bad a job. And that's what they said.

One should understand what some of the people who were there are doing — the paid lobbyists. They're trying to extract every conceivable concession they can. They are countered by people on the other side in the labour movement who are doing the same thing.

It is our goal, as we have done, to try to define what is the policy which is in the best interests of the public of Saskatchewan. That's what we're doing and that's where we think we are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Labour: Mr. Minister, your reaction to the business community has been nothing short of appalling. Your first reaction to their concerns was ridicule. In feigned disbelief you said, show me the proof that these Bills will hurt business and job creation. So the business community responded. They faxed and wrote you directly showing you in no uncertain terms how jobs and businesses would be lost in this province. Your reaction to this was equally ridiculous. They must not understand the Act, you said.

Well again the business community responded to your challenge. Last night they got a full briefing, discussed the issues for nearly three hours, Minister, and then passed a unanimous resolution asking you to stop these Bills. And what is your reaction? Well the reality comes too late, the Labour minister says. It read that in the headlines of the *Star-Phoenix*. Must have come too late.

Well, Mr. Minister, that is absolute garbage. It's another lame excuse from a lame minister. It is never too late to change these Bills. There is absolutely no reason for you to ram these Bills through the House. All you have to do today is stand up in your place and withdraw this offensive legislation and bring it back next year after you've done the job right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Far from ramming the legislation through, it has been here for several weeks. It has been called whenever the opposition indicated they're interested in talking on it. And I understand if the agenda is followed you'll have an opportunity later on today. This has not been rammed through.

We continue to believe that once members opposite and paid lobbyists with whom you work in tandem lose the opportunity to make mischief by spreading misinformation, the legislation itself will achieve a degree of acceptance. As have the legislation which we passed last year, which you opposed with the same vehemence that you opposed this legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is apparent that the Minister of Labour is on a philosophical union agenda, so I will direct my next question to the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Minister, you were appointed to the cabinet as the representative of business and economic development in Saskatchewan. The business community has sent you petitions, has faxed you hundreds of letters, has conducted surveys and studies which show significant costs and job losses in our province and has now passed a unanimous resolution calling on you to withdraw these Bills.

Isn't it time, Minister, that you admit that you are wrong, admit that you went too far, admit that the business community is right, back off, pull these Bills? Mr. Minister, will you do that today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have had an opportunity to meet with literally hundreds of business people as well as many hundreds of working people as we've gone through the process of consultation on the two Bills that the member from Maple Creek is mentioning. And I want to say that it's our belief that we have found a balance in the Bill in both Labour Standards and The Trade Union Act, and in fact the vast majority of the public in Saskatchewan, I think, believe that we have reached a balance.

I say again and I want to back up the words of the Minister of Labour in the fact that we have not met all the needs of every person in Saskatchewan. It's my feeling that the president of the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) is not satisfied that we've gone far enough in moving the legislation to the side of labour. It's my view that Dale Botting, paid lobbyist for business organizations, is not satisfied that we have gone far enough in the interest of business.

I understand where the polarized area of the province is at. They are not terribly pleased that we have gone far enough in either direction. But I want to say when it comes to people like Ross Rigney from Sears Canada, he says that, talking about the labour Bills: I deal with a lot of governments across the country and I'd rather take a leap of faith with that government — referring to the government of Saskatchewan — than a lot of others. That's in reference to the labour Bills here in Saskatchewan.

To Fred Mitchell, he's quoted as saying there must be ways these differences can be resolved. It can be a win-win situation — not make Saskatchewan look bad, but make it look like a place where people want to come, unlike the members opposite who want to make Saskatchewan look bad.

That's what you're trying to do here today. And for what purpose? The purpose is to make yourselves look better, or try to look better, in the eyes of the public. And that will be very, very difficult after nine years of waste and mismanagement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, I may have bad hearing in one ear but you have a severe case of selective hearing in both ears. Five hundred business people speak out against you and you hear only the voice of the one who is sympathetic to your government. The kind of response that you give is typical of your entire government — listen only to those that agree with you and disagree with all of the rest. Selective democracy at its worst.

Mr. Minister, it is painfully evident that this government is only open to those who support yourselves politically and deaf to all of those who oppose your will. We want you to do the economic and job creation that you were elected to do.

Since the Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Speaker, doesn't have the guts to stand up to the union leaders and defend his own portfolio, I will ask the next question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, your own polling shows that the people are most concerned about the deficits and taxes and the economy and job creation. Hundreds and thousands of tax dollars have gone into opinion research, so you know the whole story. Nowhere does the need for more power to the unions and more strict labour laws appear. Nowhere.

It has been demonstrated time and time again that these Bills will increase the deficit through higher cost to government and encourage disinvestment and job loss and likely higher taxes. Will you listen, Mr. Minister? Will anyone in your government listen to the voices of the very people who create the jobs in this province? Will you act? Will you delay passage of these Bills until you have met with the coalition, and embark on a real and meaningful consultation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, this is going to take a little bit of time; I think there were about 10 questions in the question posed by the member. But I want to say to the member opposite, that in dealing with . . . I want to use the example of oil and gas companies from Saskatchewan and from Alberta. They clearly indicate that their portfolio for drilling in western Canada is weighted largely to Saskatchewan for the reason that this is the better place to do business in all of the provinces in western Canada.

Why? Because the regulations in Saskatchewan are much less stringent when it comes to hooking up natural gas lines and oil lines than they are in Alberta. And far from what you're saying, and you should know better, coming from an area near the Alberta border, that the drilling programs in Saskatchewan which were up significantly last year are up already this year by 30 or 40 per cent. That's not an indication of a lack of confidence. That's not an indication of a lack of confidence.

Ross Rigney of Sears Canada, who established 800 new jobs here in Regina last year, says even with, even with the labour laws that we're introducing, that this is one of the best provinces to do business in.

When you say that there are 500 people opposed to the labour Bills, 500 people . . . when there was a campaign across the province to get people to come to a rally, there's 500 people opposed to the legislation. I understand that. And I'm sure if the president of the SFL tried to get 500 people out to oppose the Bills because they don't go far enough to labour side, you could get 500 labour people who didn't support the Bills either.

Our job in government is not to be able to satisfy every interest group to a person, nor should that be the interest of government nor should it be the interest of the opposition. Our job is to satisfy the needs of the public at large.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question as well is directed to the Minister of Labour today. Mr. Minister, on the petitions signed at the business rally last evening there were employers — not paid lobbyists but employers — from Saskatoon, Regina, Canora, Rosthern, and Warman.

These people have a lot better things to do with their time than to join protest movements against government legislation. And many are community leaders who do not only operate businesses and create jobs, they volunteer their time to make their communities better. And indeed they make generous contributions in order to support a better quality of life for people in Saskatchewan.

All of these individuals are asking for the opportunity to be able to deal with this legislation in a businesslike manner. Employers want to see the whole deal. They want to be able to measure the costs. And they want — and I believe they deserve — an opportunity to respond to what the final offer looks like before it is passed. What will it cost the province to wait, Mr. Minister, to give these employers the time and the information that they are asking for?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To the member who has consistently voted against any legislation for working people, let me offer you some — persistently and consistently — let me offer you some statistics on the economy. There is clearly a recovery under way, as my colleague from Regina Elphinstone said. I point out that corporate profits are up by 38 per cent in the two years which we've taken office. Bankruptcies are down by 32 per cent. Retail sales are up 6.7 per cent this year, highest in the prairie basin.

I don't know whether or not the member from Greystone is anxious for some statistics on Liberal provinces, but it is very, very, very different. In Liberal provinces, unemployment in Newfoundland — let's just take them from east to west to make it simple for the member from Greystone — in Newfoundland the unemployment rate is at 23 per cent; P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island), 22 per cent; Nova Scotia, 15 per cent; New Brunswick, 15 per cent; Quebec, 13 per cent. Ah yes, but Quebec has progressive labour law. Perhaps that accounts for that relatively low unemployment rate. Almost all of those are twice ours.

Progressive labour legislation, I say to the member from Greystone, is an essential part of an economic restructuring. The economic restructuring is under way, and this province isn't just going to survive, it's going to thrive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'm sure that people will call in to question your accuracy on what it is you've just discussed in this legislature because indeed, I voted in favour of occupational health and safety legislation.

And would you like to know, sir, that last evening one of the people who have been referred to you as a lobbyist was one Mike Carr, who worked on that very legislation and said that occupational health and safety was able to be a success because of the consensus reached through business and labour, which he proclaims is something that is problematic with both of these pieces of legislation.

Mr. Minister, one employee in a room, generally represents one job. One employer in a room can represent dozens of jobs. Hundreds of employers in a room represent the future of job creation, investment, and economic development in this province. The employers who gathered last night, they were not asking for money; they weren't asking for hand-outs; they were asking for something very simple that you can provide, and that is time.

Mr. Minister, will you show some respect for the Saskatchewan economy and allow business time to deal with your labour legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I am very reluctant to turn this question period into something that may sound like a personal attack on the member from Greystone, but I find your comments offensive.

When you say that each worker represents one job but every employer represents many jobs, you therefore suggest that employers count for a lot and workers don't count for much. That's what you say and that's how you vote in this House.

You have voted against the changes to Workers' Compensation Board; you've voted against The Labour Standards Act; and if you'd had the opportunity, I have no doubt that the member from Greystone would have voted against the abolition of child labour in the cotton factories in England. I have no doubt you'd say there what they said there, and cotton won't be produced in England if you abolish child labour. But it still is.

And the economy will go on. And the economy will thrive hereafter, notwithstanding the dire prediction of the member from Saskatoon Greystone and her style of thinking, which is a good century out of date.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'm not going to be satisfied until you actually answer the question. And the employers who spoke last night gave a very loud and clear message for all of Saskatchewan. They're asking you not to proceed with Bills 32 and 54 until they've seen the regulations and the proposed amended legislation together.

Mr. Minister, evolution takes time; revolution is faster. And nobody in Saskatchewan wants a revolution. Business doesn't want one; labour doesn't want one; and certainly your government does not want one. Why are you in such a desperate hurry to keep up with what everyone sees as a political agenda that you would deny the little extra time to those people who hold the key to our economic growth? The Premier of this province calls employers job creators . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Would the member put her question, please.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Little point in asking her to give a question — she had none anyway. Let me just say to the member opposite, you said that evolution takes time; revolution is quicker. Well all I can say about Liberals is that Liberals are incapable of any motion at all — any motion at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This government is not capable of motion. This government is reforming our labour laws because we believe that that is an essential part of the economic restructuring which is already under way as I pointed out from the statistics. This province is going to be returned to a prosperous, a fair, and a compassionate society, notwithstanding the best efforts of the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour as well.

Mr. Minister, the business people generally don't attend meetings like the one that was taking place in Saskatoon last night. The number of business people who took time out of their busy schedules to attend last night's rally and to sign a petition is very significant. They felt it was time to stand and be counted, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately there will always be those who will not sign a petition for fear of being singled out.

Mr. Minister, there were four MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) present at the meeting last night. Two members signed the petition, and two members did not sign the petition. One was the NDP (New Democratic Party) member for Saskatoon Wildwood — did not sign. And the other member was the Liberal member from Saskatoon Greystone — did not sign the petition. And here we see today her standing and asking for help for the business community in this province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that the member from Greystone refused to sign the petition when offered because she said she did not want to appear to be biased. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, why did your member not sign the petition?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I suspect the member from Saskatoon who sits on this side of the House didn't

sign the petition because she didn't agree with the contents of it although I have not talked to her about it.

When I hear of the member from Saskatoon Greystone going to the rally and then not signing the petition, I'm reminded of something Mr. Douglas said when he sat two seats from here a quarter of a century ago. He was once accused of being a Liberal in a hurry. His response was: any Liberal in motion would look like a Liberal in a hurry. And that's what I say to the member opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — If you go to a rally opposing the legislation and you don't want to sign the petition, one might ask what you bothered to go for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, there's a lot of people in this province that wish that you would be in a little bit of a hurry. What we've seen here today is a collective *Alice in Wonderland* sort of response from your government. You all collectively drop down the rabbit hole and deny that there's any problems out there.

Well I remind you, Mr. Minister, that there are 82,000 people on welfare in this province. There are 16,000 fewer jobs than when you took office. You have the lowest number of people working in our economy in the last 10 years, and out-migration continues to other provinces in Canada. Now, Mr. Minister of Economic Development, who won't stand up for the 500 in Saskatoon last night who booed your friend: are you only going to make deals with a few big people, or are you going to stand up for all of the little people in this province that employ the people and take the folks off welfare and make the jobs? When are you going to stand up and defend instead of deny, deny, deny, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The words of the member, I say, are close to libellous as it would refer to a great business person in Saskatchewan, Fred Mitchell. And I challenge you to go and visit Mr. Mitchell and tell him that to his face and make those kinds of comments about an important business person in this province.

And you can say that about Ross Rigney of Sears Canada who says this is a good place to do business. You can say it about Roger Phillips who thinks this is a good place to do business. You can say it about Chuck Childers with Potash Corporation who told me a week ago that he thinks this is a good place to do business. Or you can say it to Terry Summach from Flexi-Coil who denies the words of Dale Botting that he's thinking about moving out of the province. So you can insult people who are working with the government all you want — the chamber of commerce who was not involved in the rally last night.

You can rule all those people out. And you can go through your political organization between the Liberal and the Conservative, and you can go to the rally and try to get your troops going in order to get some politics rolling.

But I say the comments about the Liberal leader, that she wouldn't sign the petition, speak volumes about the commitment to what is really going on here; that is the act of governance and creating legislation that's in the best interests of the majority of the people of the province. That's what this is all about and that's what we're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 70

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 70 — An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act (No. 6)** be now read a second time.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to take this opportunity to speak to the amendments contained in Bill 70, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

For months we have waited for the government to address the deficiencies in this legislation, especially how it outlines the duties and the powers of the Board of Internal Economy. While this legislation before us for debate amends how that body functions, it is far from the panacea in terms of removing all the ambiguity that surrounds the issues of, for example, the partisan use of communications allowance. It is still the duty of the Board of Internal Economy to lay down the rules governing the use of allowances.

Although the Speaker is charged with determining if an expense has been correctly made, he makes that determination based largely on the guidelines of the Board of Internal Economy and how the board has laid them out for him.

I know that this issue alone will provide much interesting debate in the upcoming meetings of the Board of Internal Economy. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is best viewed presently as a band-aid solution, and there needs to be considerable debate about some of the implications contained in it before it is passed.

It is interesting however that the minister, speaking to second reading of this Bill, somehow believes that he created an independent commission to review all aspects of MLA pay. In fact provision for that

commission was created by Bill 99, which was passed by the previous legislature on November 5, 1987. All that the current government can take credit for is adding one more section, which is section 50, for review of the commission.

While this Bill may appear simple and straightforward, there are many questions that I know that my caucus and myself need answered, and assurances that I want given before I can completely support its content.

One question that will need to be answered is, are the provisions for a review of MLA expenditures by the Speaker retroactive? We need to know how far back these expenditures will be subject to review.

There is no time provision within which the Speaker must commence his investigation of an alleged misuse of funds. And we are all aware of the cloud that hangs over members of this Assembly, both past and present, as a result of inexplicable delays in proceedings with investigations into past spending practices of individual members and caucuses. I believe that to strengthen the intent of this Bill and to remove potential doubts surrounding these kinds of matters in the future, we should put some time for commencement of the Speaker's review in the legislation.

I'm pleased to see in this Bill, an appeal mechanism whereby a member can appeal the Speaker's review outcome to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. However, I am disappointed that the Bill does not then conclude logically to state that the opinion of the commissioner shall be final. Again, I want some additional clarification from the minister and the legislation drafting officials about this section.

(1415)

I do know, Mr. Speaker, that there should be members of this legislature who are indeed interested in, and committed to, seeing these changes. Obviously it's not something they would like to participate in in any thoughtful manner since they continue to do what they generally do, and that's not listen.

As I understand the amendments before us, the Speaker can order a member to repay an allowance. But the way this section is drafted makes it seem that we're only dealing with current sitting members. What is the authority of the Speaker or the commissioner in retrieving monies paid to a member if the member no longer exists in office?

There are several other similar sections which I do look forward to reviewing in detail with the minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition. Perhaps my concerns may sound like semantics, but in legislation, semantics can mean a great deal. I believe that there are some real problem areas that could arise if we do not specify as succinctly as possible our intentions regarding the scope and the intent of this Bill, or any other for that matter, before we rush to pass it.

We waited 72 days, Mr. Speaker — 72 days of this session — for the government to produce this long-awaited Bill, so a few more hours of debate is not too much to ask when we are dealing with an issue that is so critical to each of us. Again I do look forward to meeting with representatives of the other two parties to address several minor deficiencies in this Bill and I hope that we can bring to Committee of the Whole our efforts as a package of unanimous House amendments.

Until we can have our meeting and do so, I will adjourn debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Finance Vote 18

Item 1

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. What I want to do with you today, Madam Minister, is go back to March 2 in *Hansard* when I asked you some questions at that time in question period regarding the federal budget.

And the issue that we were discussing was the changes contemplated in section 80 dealing with write-downs, and not the farm bankruptcy that you were referring to at that time which I believe was section 79. It is section 80 that is being contemplated as being changed, and some of the potential impact that that could have on the farmers of Saskatchewan in particular. And if it was section 79 then we would have the same concern for small business.

Now, Madam Minister, at that time I raised the potential of problems for farmers and businesses that were experiencing financial difficulties, not in bankruptcy situations, but still having to face the reality of coping with their financial stress. And at the time, Madam Minister, it appeared to us that because of the federal Liberal budget, there was the potential in the ways and means supplementary to the Income Tax Act that there would be changes there that would consider any write-downs that farmers might be able to negotiate with their lenders, be it FCC (Farm Credit Corporation), be it ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan), be it a credit union, be it a bank — whatever lending institution it may be — that that particular write-down would now have the potential of being perceived as income and therefore being taxable.

And I think at that stage, Madam Minister, you were telling me that it was premature at that time because no change had yet been implemented and that they were only being contemplated and that the federal minister had given you his assurance that if there was any change of any significance whatsoever, you would be forthrightly apprised thereof.

And so I want to ask you now, Madam Minister, is

there the potential for this damaging legislation and these damaging changes to come to fruition so that our hard-pressed businesses and farming enterprises could see their future in jeopardy because they would then be forced to borrow money to pay income tax on that portion of that write-down that would be affecting them. Could you respond to that at this time, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite: yes, I recall the questions being asked in the House and I recall the responses. I think what I was saying at the time is if there was a tax change which would have significant implications for Saskatchewan, it was my view that the federal Finance minister would have informed us of those changes because he did call all Finance ministers hours before he released the budget, and told us of the tax changes. This one wasn't flagged at that time. It doesn't mean though that there isn't a possibility of a change, that is not intended to affect farmers, in fact having that result.

So after you flagged the issue with me in the House — and I appreciate the fact that you did that — we have been in touch with the federal Department of Finance; we have raised the concern with them. They have not drafted, at least as of our last discussions with them, they had not drafted the final legislation.

So they were not aware of the issue from the point of view of Saskatchewan, so we've raised the concern. We've actually gone so far as to have a meeting between officials on that issue, and we will continue to ensure that the legislation doesn't even inadvertently — even if it's intention was to not effect farmers — it doesn't even inadvertently have a negative impact.

Mr. Neudorf: — As of what date is that correspondence that you're talking about, Madam Minister? Because on March 3 you told me in one of your responses that legislation has to be drafted yet and that the explanatory notes for the legislation have to be approved. So you were saying then that on March 3 it was at a preliminary stage. The response that you got from the minister now, and his department, was subsequent to this date? What was the date of that correspondence?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member's question, we have not got formal correspondence of recent date. The most recent discussions were . . . our officials actually went to Ottawa and sat down with the Finance officials.

So as I say, what we're doing is we're keeping on top of it. We have no reason to believe that this legislation is necessarily going to proceed this session. When you say it was at a preliminary stage, you know what you're saying — if it was at a preliminary stage in March, wouldn't it be at a pretty advanced stage right now?

Unfortunately, one of the problems we're having with the federal government is that there are changes that

we want made, like changes to help us enforce the tobacco legislation, which we believe are not going this session. So there will be a lot of legislation that will not go this session and it doesn't necessarily mean that this will be proceeded with this session.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well I appreciate that answer, Madam Minister. And I appreciate your concern and your commitment that you'll continue to look out for Saskatchewan citizens.

Could you confirm that whatever income tax becomes payable on this let down, or write-down, pardon me, that in fact the Government of Saskatchewan would then also reap the benefits of that type of tax, according to your percentage, which is what? — 52 per cent now of the federal tax, that that individual then also would be paying a provincial tax?

And I appreciate the concern that you're showing me now, but if that is the case, that the Saskatchewan government would then reap the benefit — and I'm saying "if", and you can confirm whether or not that is the case — would you be then prepared to bite the bullet as far as the Saskatchewan legislation and the income tax department would be concerned, that you would bite the bullet and show leadership to the federal government by not then ascribing that tax to have to be paid by the individual concerned, at least to the provincial government?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite raises an important point. The way the tax system is structured right now, we would benefit from the change. Because we feel, from what we've seen so far, the number of people affected would be very small, the amount that we would benefit would be small. But the member's perfectly correct, we would benefit.

And the member is perfectly correct in his sort of assumption that we would have no flexibility to opt out of benefiting; that is, you can't say to the federal government, even though you've made this tax change, we don't want it to affect our share of the tax, which brings me to a very important point.

One of the things we keep saying, along with the other western provinces, to the federal government, is we want more flexibility with respect to our tax system. When we talk about tax reform, what we keep saying is we want the flexibility to make those sorts of choices within Saskatchewan; just because the federal government thinks that a certain type of tax is an appropriate tax, we want the freedom to say no, we don't want that to be a deduction in Saskatchewan, or we do want this to be a credit in Saskatchewan. Because the way the system is structured now, we don't have that flexibility. To me, a part of tax reform, a key part, is to get that flexibility from the federal government.

Mr. Neudorf: — Of course, Madam Minister, the flexibility would only be appropriate and desirable if it was for the better good of the people of this province.

In terms of the flexibility that you request, I can see advantages in it, and I can see why you would want that. But there would be mechanisms in place, surely, where you could collect the tax, turn around and rebate it to the people, and so on. So there would be mechanisms that you could employ, so that these farmers and businesses would not find themselves out of house and home simply because of some rule in Ottawa.

So it would seem to me, Madam Minister, that if your heart was in the right place, mechanisms could be found in order to accomplish that goal. And heaven knows I'm not advocating more of a bureaucracy and so on in order to accomplish that, but there would be a way and I'd just like to have your reaction to that.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is perfectly correct in saying you could, if you were totally determined and you put all these people to work on it, they could find a way around it. But you're also correct when you say, what a bureaucracy and how cumbersome it could be to do that. So our first approach here and so far . . . I mean I think what you do in politics is you try the first line of defence and if that doesn't work you move to the second.

We still feel confident on the first line. That is, the legislation is not drafted yet, it's not in place, we have made our point persistently, we believe that they've heard. It's only when we actually are informed that it is being drafted, the legislation is being drafted, and there is a problem, then we'd move to stage 2.

(1430)

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, the finance critic wasn't able to be here today to finish off your estimates, but I had a few questions anyway that I wanted to ask so this worked out very nicely.

Recently we've had a House of Commons committee travelling around the country soliciting opinion on how Canadians should be taxed. And I think this is with a view to the Liberals keeping their promise about replacing the GST (goods and service tax) and how we go to more fair taxation. I didn't have the opportunity to appear before the committee because of other commitments.

But my understanding of the recent reports of the committee is that they are recommending Canada-wide harmonization, that they are talking about base-broadening, and reducing some rates, but not throwing out the GST — and this was an all-party effort with input from all around Canada. And I would like comments from you on whether . . . I don't know if you attended or not and what submissions the provincial government made in regards to this commons committee, and what your views are of the recommendation that they've made back to the House of Parliament.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the

member opposite, well you used to be the critic so it's good to be able to have one last exchange here, so there's no problem with you rather than the member from Morse.

We've been talking to a lot of provinces with respect to the GST. And what they're saying is something pretty simple. The Liberals promised to eliminate the GST and that's what we expect. We expect the GST to be eliminated. We do not expect it to be quick-fixed, oh well we kind of meant eliminate, but we didn't mean eliminate.

And the provinces are not in a frame of mind to engage in something that is not above-board; that is, to engage in something whereby we would be assisting the federal government to renege on an election promise to the Canadian people. They said the GST would be eliminated; we're waiting to see how they're going to proceed. So that's the first point.

And we've had discussions with a number of other provinces and there's a general feeling to that effect, no matter what the province happens to believe about the issue of harmonization. That is, some provinces who would have in the past supported harmonization still feel that there is an issue of principle here. When the election was run on the basis of elimination of the GST, that's what the federal government should be delivering.

The second point which this government believes — and again we've consulted with other governments which share our view — is we have many problems in the tax system. When I was discussing the issue of farm income tax with your colleague, what we were saying there as a government is we need a different tax system, we need more flexibility as provinces.

So once again, we're not prepared to just take one little part of the tax system, which is the sales tax, and cooperate in fixing that without asking more general questions about the whole tax system and how it needs to be reformed.

The third thing I would say is about the process. And the process for the GST is just like the other processes that the Liberals have established — they're unilateral. They invite us to come and to talk about the tax change that they want. They have no provincial participation in deciding what other tax changes are required to make the system fairer and to make it more effective.

And again, the western premiers have taken a position on other changes that they want to see. One change they want is the one I was mentioning to your colleague — they want more flexibility with respect to the income tax system. The other change that we all agree in western Canada we want is changes with respect to the collection of taxes, because it's cumbersome, it's expensive, and it doesn't work.

So from the point of view of the Government of Saskatchewan and other governments, it's an issue of principle, it's an issue of proper consultation, and it's

an issue of broader tax reform.

Mr. Swenson: — Madam Minister, the Liberals wouldn't be the first political party that made a stupid election promise. I mean for you to stand here and say the reason that we're not doing anything is we're waiting for the Liberals to come through on a stupid election promise isn't good enough. I thought the whole process behind politics, as you refer to it, whether it's in the House of Commons or here or anywhere else, is problem solving.

Now we'll have our political biases certainly and we'll have our philosophical biases. But I thought . . . and I didn't have the opportunity to appear, and for that I am sorry because it would have been interesting to be part of that process — but everything I've been able to read on that committee is that they genuinely started to do some problem solving on an all-party basis. And they went across and they listened to hundreds of people across Canada, and at the end of that process, it came back that Canada has more room to broaden its tax base that way, in a more fair way, than they do any other way.

Now if you can tell me that the newspaper reports and the things coming out of the House of Commons are wrong, then tell me that. But that was the recommendation. And I noticed the Liberals at their recent convention saying the majority of them wished to lower the rates, but broaden the base. And that seems to be a universal feeling across Canada.

So how do you tell me that your government . . . and I'd like you to tell me what other governments you talk about when you say that your government in conjunction with others — I hope it's just not Harcourt and Rae — don't agree with this process.

If there's something here that the public should know about that our provincial premiers and provincial governments are up to on the taxation side, please enlighten us. Because I don't think the population in this province, who are as concerned about fair taxation as anywhere else in Canada . . . and certainly, the economic challenges that we have, given new labour legislation, given some other things that are going to impact on the cost of doing business in this province, want to understand that taxation will be applied universally across Canada in a fair way. Because we are in a global market today, and how Alberta functions tax-wise, how Manitoba functions tax-wise, how the United States functions tax-wise is very important on how we survive.

And business people here are no different than they are anywhere else in Canada. Why would we lower provincial trade barriers if it was not to reach some type of a consensus Canada-wide how we can be better off economically, we can be more fair, and that the average citizen knows that he is also being treated fairly by the system?

Now I thought that that type of a process was a good one. You're telling me that it's fundamentally flawed because the Liberals made a stupid election promise.

Well that's not good enough. I think we should be able to take this discussion a little bit further down the road. You've had three years nearly now in government. You denied harmonization back in 1991 and yet a lot of people across Canada believe that that is the proper process to go by.

Tell me why the submissions that were made to that commons committee, which in the end basically came to that conclusion, were wrong.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. What I said were three things. I said . . . and I will mention the government that is most adamant about, it's an election promise, and we expect it to be lived up to.

And the member opposite is going to be a little bit surprised when he finds out which government is taking that position, because I've checked with my officials and it's a public position. So I'll get into that in a minute.

But the other two points I made was the process. The federal government says, here's the question we're asking, here's the time frame, here's where we're going to go, and here's who we're going to open the doors to. It's their process, not ours; but the key point is tax reform.

What they have said is you've got a whole pie, a whole tax pie — different issues in the tax system that different groups bring up. You have one going to the Supreme Court right now about the taxation of child benefit programs or maintenance programs. So you've got a whole range of taxation issues and different groups concerned about different parts of the pie.

But they said, our process is this: we're going to take this one little, narrow piece out of the pie. That's tax reform for us, this one narrow piece. And we're going to go across Canada and we're not going to be surprised because we don't get a lot of people beyond business groups out, because they're only talking about the one narrow piece of the pie. We said, hold on; this is a new government in Ottawa, a new mandate. What we want is the whole pie talked about. We want other groups to have their chance to have their say.

Now with respect to the politics of it, when we consult with other governments, this is obviously confidential, and I don't want to phone another Finance minister and then have the minister find out two weeks later I conveyed our private conversation to the legislature. But I will tell you, because it is a public opinion, this is a publicly noted statement or position, the government that is most adamant about the GST being eliminated, because it's a tax that shouldn't be here and because the Government of Canada promised, the present Government of Canada promised in the last election to eliminate it — it's not Mike Harcourt; it's not Bob Rae — it's the Tory government in Alberta. Ralph Klein has said the GST is

to be eliminated. That's our position.

Mr. Swenson: — Well that doesn't surprise anyone, Madam Minister. I mean Alberta has been the only tax-free jurisdiction in this country probably since the First World War. I mean that's the way they have operated because they had resource revenue that they chose to use in lieu of taxation.

So the fact that Albertans or an Alberta premier would say we don't like sales tax is no great mystery to anyone in this country. No great mystery, Madam Minister. The simple fact is that the province of Alberta, whether they like it or not, do understand that worldwide taxation has changed. And we only have to look at our major competitors around the world and see where they derive most of their taxation from. And they have backed off personal income tax and they have gone on to broad-based consumption taxation. And that's all over the place, and you and I both know it.

Now, Madam Minister, it is also no surprise that business people would show up. Because I don't know of a government in this province or in this country that hasn't used business as the vehicle to collect the tax. So naturally they show up because they're the people that are at the front end. They're on the sharp end of the stick.

Government brings in the GST; who collects the GST? The business people do. You put an extra point on your sales tax; who collects it, Madam Minister? The business people collect it. So there's no great mystery there that they would be concerned, because they're the people that always take the brunt of government decisions. Every time you do something, there's a business person out there that has to suck it up and implement your policy. It's not the bureaucrats in the Department of Finance that go out and deal with the public on a daily base, it's business people.

Now, Madam Minister, if business people, the people that have to collect your taxes and collect the Prime Minister's taxes, show up to the hearings and come forward with a recommendation, I would say that you should listen to it. Because they're the people that have to do your dirty work for you all the time. They're the people that collect the taxes.

So, Madam Minister, once again could you tell me and the House and the people in the province of Saskatchewan where the provinces are coming from then on fair taxation. If there has been discussions, you don't have to name them individually, but give us an idea. If you disagree fundamentally with the House of Commons committee recommendations, give us an idea of what the counter-proposal is that takes in more of the pie on fair taxation, rather than harmonizing sales taxes across Canada under one administration at a lower rate.

If there is some other fair taxation agenda, why wouldn't you want to share it with this House so that people in this province, who are some of the highest-taxed citizens in our country, would have an

idea about where the government is going, what types of regimes that they're going to face in the future, what portion of their personal income tax they may be able to use for other things.

If there is another agenda, as you say, that takes in more of the pie than this narrow wedge which you claim that the commons committee was selecting, then I think it's appropriate that we discuss it in your estimates because you are the minister who discusses these things with other ministers across Canada, and discusses fair taxation.

And I have heard nothing out of your government over the last three years except criticism. You criticized harmonization in '91; you criticize the Liberal government now; you've criticized the commons committee. But at the end of the day we have no idea where you, Finance minister in the New Democratic Government of Saskatchewan, are coming down on fair taxation.

Give us your view — and you obviously tell me you have allies across Canada for your view — why don't we put it on the table here and we'll see how it works with the public? This is the proper forum.

(1445)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, member opposite, it has been on the table — it has been on the table in written form, it has been on the table verbally, if you turn on TV it has been on the table.

Let me tell you, all you had to do was read the western premiers' report. The one from the meeting in Alberta, it was in there, great section, very clear what we wanted, why we wanted it; and look at what was said in Gimli because it was reaffirmed in Gimli. So it is very clear what the position is of these four, actually six, governments in Canada.

And the position is that we want a broad . . . we want broader changes in the tax system rather than just merely addressing one part of the pie; and we're quite specific about what we want. We want something called tax on taxable income, which means that you're given more flexibility within the income tax system to decide what is a tax credit, what is a deduction. People know when they fill out their income tax form that the province only becomes a factor in their income tax form when they get to the very end and they decide how much tax you owe and then the province just takes a certain percentage of the federal tax owed.

We want more flexibility to decide in Saskatchewan these sorts of business deductions should not be eligible deductions any more; we don't have that flexibility. Or that we would like to have this sort of tax credit for low income people. We want to be able to do these things in an easy way, not a cumbersome way.

And so this is clear, it's on the record; it has been on the record for months, and it's been on the record with

respect to the federal government. So we want those sorts of changes.

We also want changes in the collection and administration of taxes. And again we've been very clear, what we want — and we have support from the other western and northern governments — we want a single tax collection agency to collect all taxes on behalf of both jurisdictions — federal, provincial.

Now what we want the federal government to do is to address these sorts of issues as well as just the issue of GST.

Mr. Swenson: — Well once again, Madam Minister, you aren't saying anything here that hasn't been said by western provincial governments for years and years and years. I mean one of the inducements about harmonization was that you simplified the collection procedure, that you got rid of some of the costs, because the alternative that you talk about is collecting your own tax like Quebec does. And there's always been a price tag attached to that.

So I guess you could run off . . . and the last figures I saw were — if Saskatchewan and Alberta, for instance, went together and collected all of the taxes and remitted a portion back to the federal government — was in excess of \$120 million a year. Now that's a lot of money. That's taxpayers' money that you presently don't spend because the federal government does that on your behalf, and then they remit to you.

So what you talk about here in business deductions means that you would have to move to that model. Perhaps western Canada would have to move to that model. But there is a cost attached to it. And the way you present this thing and the way it was presented by the western premiers at Gimli was that there was some kind of freebie here for the taxpayer. And you and I both know that that's not true. At the end of the day, the administration as you move into those areas will be very, very significant.

Now, Madam Minister, are you saying that that's the way you want to go, that you're going to do all of the collections and you're going to assume all of the costs? If that's the case, I'd like you to put it on the record.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, no. What we are supporting is this. We all support the idea . . . two things about the tax system. It has to be a fair system, and it has to be a simple, easy to administer system. What we're saying is that we have a complicated system now. We have provincial governments collecting tax, provincial governments collecting sales taxes. We have federal governments collecting sales taxes. We have the federal government collecting the income tax. What we're saying is we want, as governments, provincial and federal, one independent agency supported by both levels of government which would collect all taxes on behalf of all governments, federal and provincial.

The advantages would be cost; be less costly and for business people less burdensome, less administratively complex. So that's what we mean there.

But in a way, this is all premature because we have no idea what the commons committee is going to report. We have not seen the report. I think we have been absolutely open and up front with the people of Saskatchewan in terms of what our positions are to date, what our thinking is, what other governments we're consulting with — working very closely with the other western and northern governments particularly. And we will continue to do that.

And I will make another further commitment. We believe that the people of Saskatchewan need to be consulted about how their tax system should look. We hope the federal government is going to do that consultation, not just about one little narrow piece of the pie, but about the whole pie. But if they don't, we certainly will ask them. So there will be lots of opportunities for input and discussion.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I certainly hope so, Madam Minister. Your record for consultation in other areas has been rather dismal. And we get a taste of that in this House each and every day. And 500 of the folks that have to collect your taxes showed up in Saskatoon last night, your home community, to tell you that they don't like the way your government consults.

So if we're going to go through a consultation process on the issue of taxation in this province, I hope you don't automatically discount, as you seem to do, the business community for one — who probably will have to collect a good portion of taxes that you want — as being irrelevant, that they are too narrow in focus.

And I'll be very surprised, Madam Minister, of the 82,000 people on welfare in this province, if very many of them show up to your tax hearings. And the same with the thousands of people on UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) and seniors, low income seniors. There won't be many of them show up to your hearings.

Simple fact is that taxation, even though it affects us all, affects some of us far more than others. And the responsibility of government is being able to discern what is the best and fairest system in an open manner. So let's hold these consultations and see what comes out of it.

But you know what? At the end of the day, I'd be willing to wager with you here, if the process isn't politically manipulated, that you will get basically the same kind of feeling that the House of Commons committee got. Because people travel, people understand what's going on around North America and around the world, and they see how other areas who compete with us tax. And those views are going to get stronger and stronger.

So if we can have an open process, no manipulation and honest consultation, then I believe you'll get the same message. And I'd be willing to participate in that, and stake a good part of what I believe in on that process. And I hope you'd do the same.

Madam Minister, I have here five pages of questions from people around the province of Saskatchewan who have written in to our "Mr. Premier I want to know . . ." And rather than enter them all into verbatim, what I would like from you is a commitment that you will endeavour to, if I provide you with this list, to answer each one of these individuals in writing because I think if taxpayers around this province are concerned enough to write in a question to the Premier on taxation issues, that they deserve an answer.

And they're general economic in some cases, and here's an example. I'll use this one to give you a flavour. This is from a Henry Denesik of Wynyard. And he says, Mr. Premier I want to know . . . wants to know why he has to pay income tax on medical disability pension when welfare recipients do not. They're that flavour of question, and I think they'd appreciate an answer back from you. Can I have that commitment?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, yes, you certainly can have that commitment. And I think that process actually worked quite well. I thought some of the best questions we had in question period were the ones that came from the average person, so I'd be very pleased to answer those questions.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 18 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Servicing the Public Debt
Government Share
Vote 12**

The Chair: — There is no vote required but it is available for questions or comments.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I just see the officials leaving, and I want to have the opportunity to thank them on behalf of certain people and they're already gone.

An Hon. Member: — No, they're still there; they're back there.

The Chair: — You can thank them on the record.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay, I would like to do that, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the member from Morse, the Finance critic, and myself, I appreciate the role the officials played today and the minister through this series of estimates. And it's not an easy job and we do appreciate the efforts and the answers that were made.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, I will undertake to thank the officials for the member opposite. And I thank the member opposite for the questions.

Item 1 — authorized by law.

**General Revenue Fund
Debt Redemption, Sinking Fund
and Interest Payments
Votes 175, 176, 177**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive — authorized by law.

The committee reported progress.

(1500)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 32 — An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, here we are again discussing Bill 32 and today I think we can have probably the most meaningful approach to the Bill. We've now had an opportunity for some time to go by so that folks in the community have become aware of not only the Bill but its contents, and of course they've had now time to discuss what the implications and ramifications of the Bill will be to different segments in our society and to society as a whole.

Obviously most folks who are listening today will be aware of the fact that we did have the business rally in Saskatoon last night, the reason for which we had I think all . . . let this Bill sit for a just a little while to find out how the folks really felt about it. But now the jury is in and the verdict is that the people in the business world are not happy. They express that unhappiness through a letter to yourself which I think would be proper to put on the record so that the rest of the folks of the province will know that we have paid some attention to it.

So I'm going to quote from the letter that was sent to yourself, a copy of which was thankfully sent over to our office as well. And after we get through this we will ask you some specific questions with regards to the opinions that were expressed at the major rally held last night.

This letter begins by addressing the Minister of Labour with his surname and goes on to say:

Last night in Saskatoon an assembly of approximately 550 business owners, taxpayers, and their employees, gathered together to express their ongoing concerns over Bill 32 and 54, and the government's consultation process. As a result of this meeting we are enclosing a petition which calls upon the Saskatchewan government to delay passage of this legislation until further amendments can be made and until all final

regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are also fully detailed as a result of proper consultation with the business community.

We are also enclosing the detailed wording of three resolutions which were passed by this very large, unprecedented assembly of business groups which came together from all corners of the province. Resolution no. 1 and 3 were passed unanimously. Resolution no. 2 was carried with the support of over 500 people and only one vote against. Please give these resolutions and petition your most serious consideration.

The Saskatchewan business coalition is also still awaiting a reply to our request to meet with the Premier and his senior cabinet ministers as per our joint letter of May 13, 1994. Once again, we respectfully suggest that this unprecedented unity should merit a meeting.

And it is signed, sincerely, Dale Botting, the executive director of the prairie region of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and spokesman, Saskatchewan business coalition.

Minister, the obvious thing that we have to note from the letter is the resolution and the unanimity of this group of people that gathered together last night. I think that you would recognize the fact that business people, by their very nature, are competitive. They are in business, many of them, trying to sell product in competition with other businessmen. Much of the atmosphere of business itself by its very nature is adversarial. And as a result of that most business people find themselves reluctant to join forces with other businessmen on any subject, because usually they're competing against one another to try to get a share of the market or a share of the potential profits within the province or without.

So to see that number of people and that number of businesses, many of them in competition with one another, coming together to join as a force to bring to your attention their needs, that is extremely significant, Minister — extremely significant. It's not like a union leader saying to the union troops, we all have to go and storm the legislature and stand on the steps, and if you don't, we're going to keep track of you.

See, there's no threats, there's no intimidations. These business people came there of their own free will with no potential recourse being taken by anyone if they didn't show up. There was no hammer over their head. This is not like a meeting of union people where you're told if you don't show up, we'll have you watched.

And we know that happens. And I know the union people won't like my making this direct comparison. But the truth is the truth and they must recognize that they use the heavy hammer sometimes. And I want specifically for the media to understand that business

people did not have this hammer over their head of any kind of pressure to come, except the knowledge that if they didn't come and join together some very serious things were going to happen to them as a result of provincial legislation that is about to be passed in this Assembly.

They did that, united, only because they know very well that their very existences depends on getting changes that will allow them to survive in what one person there described as the need to compete in a global market.

We are no longer an island in the middle of a land-locked province and a land-locked continent. We are no longer an island unto ourselves. We are no longer able in this world of fast transportation and fast communications to be able to live in a shell or a box or whatever metaphor might properly apply. That is what the people there were saying. We now have to compete on a world market and we have to compete on a level playing-field. Very simply, what they're asking you for is that field to be levelled once again; a field that you, metaphorically, have put a big hill in and the business community can't climb over it.

They see that obstruction as so terrible to the possibility of maintaining their businesses that they were able to bring their employees out to support them, many of them. That's significant. The fact that the employees were willing to join with their employers to come to a rally tells me, Minister, that you'd better pay attention because both sides of the spectrum are now united in an attempt to get you, not to change the legislation altogether, but to get you to recognize that you've gone too far in putting the balance of this legislation into place. You've got the balance out of tune with the rest of the world around us.

I didn't hear anybody say, scrap the legislation. I only heard people say, delay it, put it off, rework it, do it better. I did not hear anybody say, tear it up and burn it. Those words were not used last night — I never heard that. What I did hear was some very common-sense approaches.

I heard one man by the name of Mitchell, who identified himself at the meeting, defend some of the government's action. Realistically, Minister, the man did not defend your legislation. He got up to speak against, he got up to speak against . . . if you don't mind me saying so, Minister, because you weren't there so you couldn't know what he said for sure. He did not support you.

He defended the position that business should not wash their dirty linen in public. He simply thought that the process and the mechanism used by the coalition of businesses was too dramatic. He was not in favour of the legislation by the words that he said, but he also didn't say that he was totally against it. What he did say was, that we ought to sit down and work harder behind closed doors. Quite frankly I disagree with his approach. I think the time to work behind closed doors is long gone — it's too late for

that.

We do have to, as the young man that followed him said, we do have to get out in the public with this. It's too important an issue to do behind closed doors. We have to do it in public and we have to clean it up.

So, Minister, we've had a lot of opinions expressed. I quite frankly believe that even the minister from Rosemont would agree, or the member from Rosemont would agree, that the legislation has met with far more opposition than anyone had ever anticipated. The reason being that people who attended the rally have employed some of the best and brilliant legal minds around to do a research analysis of the legislation and the potential impact it will have. A very well-noted lawyer who works with labour relations got up and explained what the effects of the legislation will be.

So no one can say that this group made a decision based on a lack of knowledge or understanding, because the time was taken for 10 speakers to get up and individually explain parts of the legislation and how it would affect their lives and the lives of the rest of the people in the province. The labour relations lawyer got up and explained how the Bills will affect people from a legal point of view, and he expressed those things that are wrong with the legislation.

It's not that hard, Minister — if you'd have come to the meeting and listened — not that hard to know what would have to be done in order to make this legislation palatable. The business coalition, by the way, for your information, actually got up and said that they were happy about some of the amendments that you have now started . . . in the process of putting into place; very happy with the fact that you had given some of those concessions. They did say though, unfortunately, you haven't gone far enough to make that level playing-field available to them to do business in this province.

And so they're saying to you that, Minister, you've got to wake up and smell the coffee here, you haven't done enough to modify this position. The few people have said to me today that the labour people are unhappy because you're softening this legislation up. I haven't heard that. I haven't seen any labour people on television or on radio. I haven't seen one news clipping today saying that the organized labour people are opposed to what you have done in the amendments to make business happier. They haven't said that because they're quite happy, obviously. That's the conclusion I have to draw.

So any of you that stand up in this Assembly and say that you have to balance between labour and business because labour's now unhappy with you and you have to back off and not do any more, that's not justified. Because we haven't seen the 500 union people on the steps demanding you to maintain your position, or to come against the business community in their requests.

I haven't seen it; I haven't seen those people; I haven't

heard from them. The fact of the matter is that they're quite satisfied with what's going on or they'd be here. The labour union has a long record of letting their opinions being known publicly very quickly.

(1515)

So, Minister, knowing now that they're not going to very dramatically oppose you making this legislation more fair to the people that supply the jobs, we now have to ask you the questions that were asked there. And we have to, in all fairness, give you an opportunity to answer those questions for the record. And so I'll begin by reading the first resolution:

Resolution No. 1: Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan government delay passage of Bill 32 and 54 until further amendments can be made and until all final regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are fully detailed as a result of proper consultation with the business community.

Minister, will you do that for the business community?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I was asked by the media after the question period: do you deny that the only people that are concerned are the paid lobbyists? Do you not admit that there's some concern in the business community which goes beyond the paid lobbyists? My answer was yes, I do. I acknowledge there is a general disquiet in the business community about this legislation. Disquiet and concern that I think is caused by uncertainty as to what the legislation is actually going to look like.

When I'm on hot-line shows and open-mouth programs and they phone in and ask me about it, they always say — they always use the conditional tense — I may have to leave if . . . My response is yes, if that would have happened you might have to leave all right, but that's not going to happen.

There is concern; it's caused by uncertainty. There is only one way to lay the uncertainty to rest and that is to pass the legislation, to pass the regulations, and get it in effect. Further procrastination is not going to resolve the uncertainty; it's simply going to add to it.

So we think the best . . . if our only goal — and it's not the goal of this legislature to put an end to people's concerns — but if that were the only goal of the legislature, we'd pass it as quickly as we could, pass the regulations as quickly as we could, and get it in effect. That is our intention.

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, I take that as an unqualified no, that you will not adhere to the resolution no. 1 passed by the business community, and of course the minister is acknowledging that from his seat.

That's unfortunate, Minister, because 500-and-some-odd business people, gathered in the city of Saskatoon, will all be waiting to hear this message today and they're going to be very disappointed with your answer. They're going to be

very disappointed that they were put to the test of spending all of that time and all of that effort just to be told that they once again don't understand the effects of the Bill on them. And as soon as they have it . . . it's like castor oil, once you've swallowed it, the effects will be good for you and the taste will go away after a while.

That's the way this works. The taste won't go away. Quite frankly, Minister, you've got 82,000 people on welfare in this province. You have 10 per cent of the people, the population of Saskatoon, now going to food banks to try to get enough to eat.

An Hon. Member: — Fourteen per cent in Regina.

Mr. Goohsen: — Fourteen per cent, my colleague throws in, for the city of Regina. And we shouldn't forget Regina in this debate even though the meeting was held in Saskatoon. Obviously the feelings and the effects of this legislation will be across this entire province, and Regina will be affected just as much as Saskatoon.

But the reality, Minister, is that you've got 16,000 less jobs now than we had in the province when you were elected. Certainly you've done some good things in some areas to offset some of it, or it would have been 32,000. But you can't dwell on the good things when they don't bring about the results of balancing the bad.

Unfortunately, Minister, you're going to not have very many more people on welfare in Saskatchewan or on unemployment because the welfare system simply can't afford any more. So people that are in need are now coming to me saying that they're being turned down the help that they need. They are being rejected even though they're hungry, even though they have no place to call a home. They are being told to go home to their parents or their grandparents. They're being told to go somewhere else for help, live off of somebody else. That's what people are being told in Saskatchewan today.

And so the numbers won't get much bigger in Saskatchewan as far as the unemployed or the people on welfare because they are going to move away. Not just the business people who create the jobs are talking about moving; it's the people who are tired of sitting in this province without a job that are going to move away. So I'm not too worried that your numbers are going to get that much bigger because those folks are simply going to be gone. The test here will have to be to watch how many people are left in the province as a whole, and quite frankly, Minister, more people have got to leave this province with this kind of legislation.

That was attested to by the young people who spoke at the meeting last night. People who represented themselves came to the microphones, and one representative was actually on the podium with the list of prepared speakers to talk to you about how these couple of Bills will affect the youth and the future of the youth in this province. They're very unhappy with what's going to happen because they

want to stay in this province. They see the potential in this province that a lot of people see, but you folks don't. We do have the best place in the world for potential to grow, but you are stifling that potential. You're killing it.

The fact of the matter, Minister, is that the young people of this province have recognized that, and they're crying to you through that meeting last night to recognize the need to let the opportunities of this province flourish. The opportunities are there.

Certainly we have natural resources beyond the imagination of the rest of the world, and you won't allow it to develop. You won't allow a business that can create jobs to stay in business because you make the business atmosphere so negative that they can't stay here. And certainly there will always be some people that will come in on a very marginal basis to develop some of the natural resources and gas; out in the Sand Hills may be one example.

Here again we have one example that comes up that you can use to defend your policies as compared to the 500 that are opposed to it and showing a negative effect from everything that you're doing.

It doesn't add up, Minister; one against 500 is not good enough odds for you to go ahead with this legislation. It's simply not good enough odds to go ahead and destroy the potential for our youth in this province, and they're going to be extremely unhappy when they hear that you have flatly refused and turned down the request that was made in fairness and honesty through their resolution last night.

The second resolution, Minister, simply was this, and I'll quote it to you:

Be it resolved that all businesses' appointments to future government regulatory committees, task forces, and commissions established by the Department of Labour work under the coordination and guidance of the Saskatchewan business coalition and that the Saskatchewan government and its Department of Labour respect the coordinating roles of the Saskatchewan business coalition in all future consultations.

Minister, this resolution was not quite unanimous, but it had a very strong majority, and I ask you today: what will you do about this resolution?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm going to make a comment, and then I'm going to move that we report progress and go to The Trade Union Act. I don't know if that's going to change the tenor of the comments, but . . . ah, I've got a little resistance from the members to your right . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Let me describe them as the members to your right. I've got a little resistance to that, do I?

An Hon. Member: — Our left.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They are indeed I guess to

your left . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You have questions on The Labour Standards Act . . . Okay, that's distinct from The Trade Union Act because you can still put your questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You have questions about The Labour Standards Act, do you? All right. Okay, I will not then move we report progress.

Let me just say with respect to the rally — and then we'll see if we can get the questions of the member for Regina North West. It's up to the chair, I guess — let me just say with respect to the rally, I don't regard 500 people as a mob scene. When they were initially . . . I partially disagree with the member from Maple Creek, and I partially agree with you. I disagree with you that 500 is a sign of overwhelming opposition. This came from across the province, among 30,000 business people.

Of those, 500 came to the meeting; most, but not all, from the city of Saskatoon, and I suggest that that's not an overwhelming crowd. It did not meet their expectations; in terms of the percentage of people that turned out, wasn't an enormous number.

I agree with you that not much importance should be attached to the relatively low turnout. I agree with you. They don't have a motto: solidarity forever. I agree. The personality of the business person makes them such that they don't readily participate in those sort of rallies. I agree with that, I agree with that.

So I disagree with you that the numbers were overwhelming; I think they were underwhelming. I agree with you that not much importance should be attached to that because they don't readily lend themselves to organizations.

With respect to the resolutions that were passed, I don't regard the meeting as representative of the business community. I do admit, in the business community there's some concern. I think that's largely caused by uncertainty. The time has come to put the uncertainty to an end.

That is our position with respect to those resolutions. Resolutions calling for a delay in the Bill, we think, will aggravate the problem of the concern and not alleviate it.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, I'm quite happy that we're going to go on with this just a little longer, because I certainly have a few more questions here as well.

Again I must, I guess, put on the record the comment that the people who gathered at the meeting last night must obviously be watching today for the results of what happens, either directly on television right now or through the media later or by phoning in to check. They will be wanting to know what your answers were because it was obvious that someone would ask you to reply to these questions today in the Assembly, and as the critic for Labour, I suppose it was natural that I would be the one to do it. But you had to know it was going to happen — everybody did — so they'll be

watching for the answer.

And they're going to be extremely unhappy to find that you are flatly, coldly turning them down. Flatly and coldly telling them that they don't understand the legislation and that they'll be happy after you put it into place. Flatly and coldly what you're saying to the business community that gathered in Saskatoon is, that they're too dumb to understand because they're going to be happy after you put the legislation into effect — legislation that they're not happy with now. You're flatly and coldly saying: you don't know what's going on; I know better; I know what's good for you; let me do it to you and then you'll be happier later because you really don't know what you want yourselves.

I don't think the business community is going to buy this argument very well. I don't think they're going to be very happy. It's unfortunate that the results of all this will neither give the official opposition any comfort in the polls, nor will it give you any comfort, but those that do the least work will reap the benefits because there is no justice in politics. But we will work hard to change that in the next while, Minister.

Realistically though the questions that I have to ask you today are related both to The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act. And because the member of the third party wants to voice a few questions before we go on to The Trade Union Act, I think it's appropriate that we give them a chance and an opportunity to put their foot in their own mouth rather than us do it for them. So I'm going to ask you to reconsider your position on these resolutions, to think hard about the fact that you might go along with the business community, and perhaps you can do that. And in the next few minutes when we change over to The Trade Union Act, I'll be happy to address the rest of the issues with you.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm quite exasperated by the actions of your government with respect to Bill 32. This whole process was doomed from the outset. You knew it and you ignored it. The fact that you abandoned your original commitment to achieve consensus between business and labour was indicative of your lack of genuine desire to forge a long-term future for Saskatchewan that does not require the government to be in control of everything.

That, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, is part of the process of letting go, a process which your government does not want to begin because you are so fearful of the slippery slope of losing power. It is apparent that you will introduce whatever legislation you choose, amend it only to your own satisfaction, and then ram it through in your haste to escape the confines of the legislature. You may proceed as you see fit because you have a majority, and we must accept that.

I see no sensible purpose in trying to amend this legislation when you have so obviously made up your mind that it will only change to the degree that you are

prepared to change it. If you were interested in building consensus, if you cared about employers and employees coming to any agreement on the regulations that will be the steering-wheel of this legislation, you would not hesitate to draft the regulations and put them before the concerned parties for review.

Mr. Minister, I urge you to withdraw this legislation from committee, to go to the process of preparing draft regulations, and to return both the Bill and regulations to the public forum for consideration. I believe that until that has been accomplished the opinions of those of us in this Assembly are a poor substitute for the critical analysis of the employers of Saskatchewan, without which this legislation would not be passed.

I urge you once again to pull this Bill, produce the draft regulations, and circulate the proposed amendments together with the draft regulations, for a minimum of 90 days to allow for public discussion, analysis, and debate before returning them to the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I thank the member for her question. I was looking for some clarification as to whether you are going to maintain your opposition to the Bill or whether your leader's reluctance to sign the petition last night signifies a more enlightened approach. I certainly didn't get any indication from that comment. I can see the Liberals are maintaining their position of decisively sitting on the fence.

Let me say with respect to the passage of the regulations, it is not our position . . . if you think about it, it's self-evident. You can't draft the regulations till you have a Bill authorizing the regulations. The Bill's got to be passed; then we've got to draft the regulations. You can't do it in reverse order. There's no way of doing that. We must pass the Bill; then we must do the regulations.

I want to point out what I've said repeatedly but which may not be clear to everyone, and that is just as there's been extensive consultation on the Bills, there is also going to be extensive consultation on the regulations. There will be extensive consultation on both.

With that, I'm going to move that we report progress on this Bill, Mr. Chairman.

(1530)

Bill No. 54 — An Act to amend The Trade Union Act

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, Minister, we have talked about The Trade Union Act in days that have gone by, but we haven't really spent as much time on it as we have with The Labour Standards Act.

And as I pointed out to you the other day, The Labour Standards Act is going to have a tremendous impact

on our province, but The Trade Union Act has a tremendous impact in a different way. This is not regulations that each businessman is going to have to adhere to in the same sense, although it has a tremendous effect on people because it affects how the unions will operate and under what rules they will be able to operate.

I only throw that in because I have a little letter from a Gordon Boychuk of the city who didn't think that I knew the difference. So just for his benefit, I want him to realize that we do understand the difference between the Bills.

What we have said, though, is that the effects of these two Bills are on the very same people, and they more or less become one huge problem. Even though they are individual in themselves, they will affect the business community and the people who create jobs and, of course, the workers of our province.

So, Minister, last night we had a meeting in Saskatoon — 550 people, according to this letter that I alluded to during the debate on Bill 32 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Regina North, I think, observes that the numbers seem to grow. Obviously he's right. In politics that seems to be like fish; they get bigger the longer after you've caught them. I can't help that. That's not something that I'm trying to address here today. You'll have to deal with that yourselves.

I was there, and quite honestly, I thought there was 500; the letter says 550. You have to live with it. I have to live with it. The reality is, though, that the place was full of a lot of people that are unhappy.

And what they did there, Minister, just to get back to this point, they made three resolutions. Two of them were passed unanimously; one was a very large majority. I've had an opportunity to talk to you directly about two of those resolutions and ask you for your judgement of how you will react to those resolutions. And you've said you will at this point not do anything with them. You're not going to listen to them; you're simply going to carry on.

I asked you in the dying moments of that debate if you would think about them as you went on with your discussion with the Liberals, and perhaps you might change your mind if you had a little more time to think about it.

So rather than go back to the first one, in order to get your first observation of the last resolution, I want you to comment on the last resolution even though it's not specifically directed to you as the other two were.

But I'll read it first and make a little comment about where it's coming from. It says:

Be it resolved that this Assembly endorse the ongoing work of the Saskatchewan business coalition and that from time to time further legislative updates and joint meetings of this kind be considered on other key issues

affecting job creation and the competitiveness of Saskatchewan.

Now, Minister, obviously that's not asking you to specifically interfere with the legislation or anything of that nature. It's simply saying that here we have a group of people saying that they want to organize yet another power, another structure as an umbrella group to defend business against yourselves.

I was a little bit puzzled that the resolution didn't go a little further and say that they also endorse those umbrella groups still in existence, like the chambers of commerce and those kinds of folks around that are already representing business. But I had nothing to do with it, so obviously this is what the people felt.

So realistically, Minister, how are you thinking in terms of the potential for the business community to be so upset with you that they're prepared yet to organize even a stronger umbrella group through this resolution?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — At one level it would be hard to disagree with the resolution. I think the resolution is worth reading for the benefit of anyone who may be watching this:

Be it resolved that this Assembly endorse the ongoing work of the Saskatchewan business coalition and that from time to time further legislative updates and joint meetings of this kind be considered on other key issues affecting job creation and the competitiveness of Saskatchewan.

At one level, nobody could object to that. At another level, I want to make it clear, however, that we will consult with a wide variety of groups in the business community. If there's any suggestion that the business coalition is our primary vehicle for consultation, I do want to attach a caveat to that.

To some extent, this is a self-appointed group. I don't know that anyone, that they actually sought election anywhere. And to some extent the business coalition is a self-appointed group. But I do want to attach a caveat to any suggestion that we ought to deal with them as a paramount business group or as our exclusive contact with the business community. That's patently not the case.

Those which have a more democratic base, I would name the chambers of commerce in all the cities. I would name the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce as at least being elected by the other chamber of commerces around the province, and so on. I would name those groups as well.

So while I don't object to . . . at a literal level, I don't object to this. But if there's any suggestion that the business coalition is our primary contact, that I do attach a caveat to. This is something of a self-appointed group, so I do want to attach that caveat that we will seek consultation from a wide variety of groups and no one group exclusively.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, we can today at least agree on one thing. And I agree that your position is a fair and reasonable one on that resolution. Certainly you should, as a government, pay attention to this coalition; you should pay attention to their needs and their requests here.

But I do agree with you that obviously the chamber of commerce and other folks that are talking about problems with business legislation should also be listened to, just as you would listen to the trade union people on these matters, and that should be a consideration. And that's fair ball. I agree with you on what you're doing here, and I think there will be some comfort in the business community knowing that at least you will recognize them, but also recognize the other players.

Now having had the great fun of spending a few minutes on something that we finally can agree is going to be done right, I want to go back and test you to see if your resolve is still so strong on the other resolutions.

I've asked you to consider this for a few more minutes, and so I'm going to give you the opportunity to rethink your position on these other two resolutions because they're extremely important to the direction of our province and to the comfort level of many, many business people.

Now I think I'd better quote the resolution again so you know which one I'm talking about. Resolution no. 1, and it reads like this, Minister:

Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan government delay passage of Bill 32 and 54 until further amendments can be made and until all final regulations and policies made pursuant to these Acts are fully debated as a result of proper consultation with the business community.

Minister, that's not such a hard question. It was made last night by a lot of business people who feel that not only Bill 32 should be held up for a while and thought through, but also Bill 54, the one we're debating right now. They want you to stop and rethink the impact that this legislation will have on the province.

They're not specifically saying they want any more money from your government; they're not specifically saying that they want any free hand-outs. They're saying let's talk about legislation here. They're not talking about a war between business and labour. They're not talking about a war between the unions and the folks. In fact one fellow even got up and said unions do some good. There's a place for them. Fair ball.

I think that was good. You should have come to the meeting. You'd have been really happy with the fair and reasonable approach that these people took.

So, Minister, would it really be so bad in the province of Saskatchewan where we are living out a six-month perhaps period of time? In the scheme of things the world has probably been here for quite a few billion years. We know that there's been civilized human beings on the world for several thousands of years.

In the scheme of things, is six months really a very long period of time? Simply a flash of the eye in the existence of humanity, and yet so important to a group of people that live here in this part of the world, here in Saskatchewan. Would six months more to reconsider this and delaying of the regulations that will affect this legislation, would that really be so hard on your government to do?

As for a couple of the comments that you made, Minister, saying that the regulations have to be in place after the legislation is passed, that you can't deal with them, that you can't write them up — I can't buy that. I don't think the business community can buy it either. Why wouldn't you be able to tell people what the regulations are going to do and how they're going to affect people along with the legislation?

Are you not simply saying that we pass legislation allowing the government to become a dictatorship, allowing the government to make regulations that in effect becomes the legislative power, that becomes the driving force of how people have to respond to the demands of the government? You can make things legal or illegal with regulations. You are making legislation with the regulations after the Assembly is gone and has no more impact on what you're doing. You're saying to the people of this province: allow me to pass legislation that will give me the power to be a dictator.

I don't think they can buy that and I know that I won't buy the argument that it has to be done that way. And I know that you will come up with an example of how a past government some place also did it that way. That doesn't make it right, and it doesn't make it workable for the best interests of all the people. In a true democracy you lay your cards on the table with the faces up. You don't hold the hand in your hand and everybody looks at the back and tries to guess what cards you've got in your hand. That's not fair democracy.

And, Minister, I ask you once again: Will you reconsider taking the advice of this resolution no. 1 from the meeting in Saskatoon last night? Will you capitulate to the demands and the requests of the people that were at that meeting?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I have already explained that we're not prepared to delay the passage of the Bill. I've already explained as well that while we're interested in what the business coalition have to say, I want to be clear that we do not regard the business coalition as the primary vehicle through which we consult with the business community. The elected and democratic bodies, chamber of commerces, the local boards of trade, are our primary vehicle. I've already explained that.

I think before we go on . . . I think before we move and report progress, in fairness, I think there was an understanding that the member from Shaunavon would have an opportunity for a question and perhaps we should now permit that.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Actually I want to make a few comments and I guess that will lead into some questions perhaps later.

I raise these with this view, looking at Bill 32 and Bill 54, Mr. Minister, because I didn't get a chance to speak in second reading on those two Bills. So I want to just raise a few concerns right now in regards to these Bills, because the people that I represent view both of these Bills sort of as a package from your government.

(1545)

And you know, when I go around talking to the people in Main Street, Shaunavon or Assiniboia or Ponteix, you know what comes up time and time again, Mr. Minister, is not so much the contents of Bill 32 or Bill 54, but why they're there at all. And it's one of priorities for your government and it, I guess in the eyes of the people out in those communities, it shows that they're definitely not the priority of your government.

And the many calls that I've received lately, and doing some of main-streeting and talking to these people, they're more than disappointed. You know you take a look at some of these communities, and I think of Frontier and Climax and Mankota, how your government has actually taken away their busing. Communities such as Ponteix are now struggling for health care services, and that also is your government that has taken it away, a community of some 700 people, struggling today to have some form of health care. Definitely that wasn't a priority for your government, Mr. Minister.

And we also take a look at things that your government could have been doing in the last session. You talked a lot about bringing in farm programs, after being so destructive in the last session and taking away anything that the farmers had, promising them that there would be something in the future. And yet you have brought nothing forward.

And it really shows where the priorities of your government are versus where the mindset of the people are and where they think that a government should be out there fighting for them.

And we'd look at communities such as Ponteix — again I've raised a number of times in question period and in speaking to the House — SaskPower offices, and these are communities that are out in Mankota and Ponteix, that whole area out there, where they have a two- or three-hour drive to get a SaskPower crew out. And in an emergency that's unacceptable. Why isn't that a priority to your government, Mr. Minister? It never is.

The highways, you've let the highways fall completely apart. Once again, if you take a look at some of the schools — Wood Mountain, I know they're fighting to retain their school in the community of Wood Mountain. Not a priority for your government.

So what is confusing to the people that I represent, and all the people out in rural Saskatchewan that I talked to so often, is why isn't there some priority for them to have some economic development? You had the Economic Development minister travel halfway around the world, how many times? He's been to Cuba and Mexico and the former Soviet Union, many of the Slovakian countries. It hasn't meant anything out to rural Saskatchewan — nothing.

In fact, just the opposite. They're sitting there . . . when you take a community such as Ponteix and you've pulled out a one-third of the workforce alone because of your health care cuts and bussing cuts, and then you expect them to be supportive of a government that says: well at this point we have to defend workers' rights. Well you don't even have workers out in those communities any more because of actions of your government.

So it's not so much what's in the Bill, it's the priority of the government itself. That's what so disappointing to the people. And you know, I get several letters, and I have one here and I know you have a copy of this, Mr. Minister, one from a Mr. Norman Kouri at Ponteix. And Mr. Kouri is an owner of Kouri's Market, and in his letter he states:

We have been in business over 72 years and never have we, as business people or citizens felt our existence and that of our children so threatened.

And they're referring to your government, Mr. Minister, that's what they're referring to. I mean as Minister of Labour . . . I don't want to dwell on whether, you know, the parts of the legislation that are necessary or good, but the fact of the matter is you guys have been asleep at the wheel. You're not helping anyone out there and they're going to take you to task in a few years on this. They're not putting up with it any longer.

And when people like Mr. Kouri are saying: listen, why don't you start to listen to what the small-business community is saying in communities where their very existence is at risk, why don't you listen to them? Maybe you don't want to travel to Saskatoon and hear what 500 or 550 business people want to tell you.

Why don't you come out to a place like Shaunavon or Ponteix and ask them what they're thinking of you? Come out to Assiniboia; see what they think of your government being solely focused . . . winding this session down, being solely focused, Mr. Minister, on bringing down labour standards, trade union, changes to auto insurance. What has been in it for those people out there? Your government has done nothing. They're going to take you to task and the Minister of Agriculture also. Why don't you take a drive out there

and see what they think of your priorities. You have done nothing.

In fact when I take a look at even some of the manufacturers that we have in the province . . . and here's a letter that I have from Bourgault Industries. And the Minister of Agriculture should recognize this name. They're a small implement . . . well not a small implement, an implement manufacturing company. And when you read through this letter, Mr. Minister . . . I don't know if you have a copy of it, so maybe I'll read a little bit of it and see what . . . you can tell me what you think of his letter.

The purpose of this letter is to express my opinion that if the proposed amendments to the Labour Standards and Trade Unions Acts are passed, Saskatchewan will lose its opportunity to grow the economy to prosperity for the foreseeable future. If these bills are passed, companies will only locate in Saskatchewan when every other, feasible location has been eliminated.

I mean if you had these people onside like the member at the back there is saying you do, I don't think he'd be writing letters like this, would he?

An Hon. Member: — He is onside . . .

Mr. McPherson: — Well this doesn't sound like he's onside to me.

In the world of manufacturing, this means only companies with the need for natural resources only competitively available in Saskatchewan, will choose to locate here. This probably eliminates 95% of all manufacturing opportunities.

An Hon. Member: — What's the date?

Mr. McPherson: — Oh, the date, it's recent. It's May 13, May 13, 1994 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, I'll give . . . I'll send a copy over because I'm sure you guys are very out of touch. It wouldn't hurt for you to read some of this stuff and find out what those people, those people that are actually creating the jobs in rural Saskatchewan, are thinking . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well they're not supporting you. They're not supporting you or else they wouldn't be sending me letters complaining about the way you guys have run roughshod over them.

He goes on to say:

Sure, you can argue that if your government makes these changes, that all manufacturing companies will not immediately pull out of Saskatchewan, but I can assure you that most are checking their options in Alberta and the States; I know we are (he says). The shift will come in the form of expansions made into the U.S. and not into Saskatchewan.

Well what do you say to people like this, Mr. Minister,

when he's threatening to not expand, or he knows of other companies that are not willing to expand here, or in fact actually pull out of the province?

And once again it's because you've, as a government you've sat back and said, well we can't offer services to people, we can't do things to protect rural Saskatchewan, we can't give them busing, we can't give elderly people any care — because of the cost. Now how often have you said that?

Just time and time again you've cut services, especially to rural Saskatchewan, because of the cost. But yet these people that have to exist in rural Saskatchewan, they create jobs, necessary jobs out there. And you've put a large cost on their shoulders and you don't even talk to them. You haven't consulted with these people at all. You're afraid to go to the meeting. Well come on out to rural Saskatchewan and have a few meetings. You haven't been around . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Minister of Justice, I'm sure that you haven't been out in rural Saskatchewan for a few years . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you haven't. Lord knows they're calling for your resignation the same as I have been.

He goes on to say:

I find it difficult to comprehend that a modern government such as yours does not understand the fact that if we want employment in our province, the proper supportive business climate is necessary.

Maybe what you should do is ask this guy, Mr. Bourgault, to be an adviser to your government, because you're that out of touch that you better start being somewhat more in touch with some of the small-business people and finding out . . . If you can't create the jobs, you better find out a way of at least retaining what is now out there.

So, Mr. Minister, well I'll start with that. I see that you and the Minister of Justice are having quite a chuckle about this guy's concern, so why don't you tell me so I can pass this on to Mr. Kouri and Mr. Bourgault, what it is that you've done or what you intend to do, for those businesses or for those employees of those businesses out in rural Saskatchewan. What have you done for them?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm going to make a comment to the member and then I'll be moving that we report progress, Mr. Chairman. But first of all, I'll respond to the member's comments.

The member's comments were mostly about non-labour issues actually. The member commented for a good deal of time about some issues that I know, I think, he probably feels strongly about — wellness and so on. I'm being as charitable as I can to the member from Shaunavon. I would . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well someone says, don't bother. I would perhaps admit his concerns about wellness are genuine. I know I think they're badly based, but they may be genuine. But the fact that you talked so much

about wellness and very little about the labour Bills, really says where . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. It really says where you're at, and that is that this is not a primary concern.

Let me deal with the letter from Gerry Bourgault, of Bourgault Industries. I am informed by someone who's talked to him, that that letter was written before he was aware of the amendments. Specifically what concerned him was the provision with respect to automatic certification. It was his view — I think mistakenly — but it was his view that this might mean his plant would be certified without the employees ever getting a vote or ever expressing their wishes.

That's not the way the provision worked in other provinces, but acknowledging the concern, we have introduced a House amendment which requires a vote in all cases. I am informed, since that House amendment has been proposed, these concerns have largely been addressed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move that this committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

(1600)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Education, Training and Employment Vote 5

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, and officials, welcome today. Mr. Minister, I had some information sent to me from the 4-H Council, Saskatchewan 4-H Council, and they were interested in having 4-H as part of the high school curriculum. I'm not sure if you received any information on this but they sent, oh, a number of pages on it. And they feel that the 4-H program would be a valid addition, a worthwhile addition to the education process because it deals with a number of the issues that students need when they move on from the secondary education system into either post-secondary education or into employment in general.

And they believe that the 4-H program would be a valuable asset for anyone who is moving on, and hopefully everyone is. They believe that it provides skills in reading and writing and arithmetic; communications, both listening and oral; creative skills and negotiations, teamwork, organization, effectiveness, and leadership.

Because there is a number of hours spent within a school year in 4-H, they feel that this type of a program would be a worthy addition and should be allowed to have a credit within the high school system. Has the Department of Education given any consideration to this?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — First of all, before I do get started in regards to the question, what I wanted to do is first of all introduce staff. Over to my left here we have Robin Johnson, the executive director of administration, and behind me I have Ken Horsman, ADM (assistant deputy minister), as well as Lily Stonehouse, the ADM. And over to my right I have Jim Benning, the president of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Association)

So with that I will therefore proceed to answer your question. I'll have the member know that 4-H, you know, has been a strong aspect of the culture and educational history of the province of Saskatchewan.

The curriculum, the way it is, when you include both the core and the adapted dimension and the common essential learnings, a lot of the teachers will include the agriculture dimension, which is an important part of Saskatchewan history. And your specific question on 4-H being a particular course itself is, of course, a unique individual question.

But I think overall a lot of the people who look at the question wherein the curriculum deals with agriculture, probably have dealt with the issue of 4-H clubs in the province. And I think just about, you know, most teachers all recognize that as an important part of our historical dimension.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I discussed with the minister at the last *estimates* an issue dealing with a couple of students from Reliance business school. I'd just like to give you a bit of an update on it.

The two students met with the new owner of Reliance, Dorothy Prior, and they were very pleased with the outcome. And although she was not required to do anything according to regulations, Dorothy fully refunded the students for their tuitions plus interest.

Ross and Petria are both very happy with the outcome and would like to submit suggestions to you regarding vocational school legislation so that no other students will again find themselves in the same predicament they did. And we will provide you with those recommendations, Mr. Minister.

I'd like to ask you some questions concerning the Avant-Garde private vocational school, Mr. Minister. We've received a number of complaints dealing with this particular school. Individuals are being expelled for asking too many questions regarding the education they're receiving for their dollars that they're spending. The students feel that there are too many students cramped into smaller than regulation-size rooms when it comes to teaching.

Mr. Minister, perhaps you have already looked into some of these issues. Has the department been doing any investigations whatsoever with the Avant-Garde school?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Thanks very much. On your first issue in relation to Reliance, you know, when you

raised that particular issue, the government responded, and I was very pleased with your comments. And as a matter of fact, we'd be happy to receive any further suggestions that you may have.

As in regards to the Avant-Garde, we had dealt with some particular issues there before. Now this is a new case, in regards to smaller rooms. And you know, I think what we will do is do some follow-up on this regard.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I have a number of other items that deal also with the Avant-Garde school, if you would look into these also. We've received complaints that the locker space is below regulations. It seems that three students are being asked to share the same space. The school is also running a professional salon within the school in which the clients for the salon have to walk through the school classrooms to reach the salon. And from what we're told, that's not up to regulations.

There's concern that the instructors do not have the proper qualifications, that students who have left the school without the tuition running out have not received a proper . . . without the institution returning the proper amount of education money to student loans similar to the situation that happened with the Reliance business school a couple of years ago.

There's no policy manual. Each student is supposed to have a doctor's approval before being accepted into the school, and this is not being done; that there is no longer a pre-entrance exam into the school, that the hours are not being kept track of, the students' hours are not being kept track of on a proper form or in a proper manner, and that the required guest speaker for informing students about the risks of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) has not taken place yet to date — and we're almost at the end of the school year, Mr. Minister. So I think some of these issues definitely need to be looked into and we would ask you would follow through with that.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Thanks very much for sharing that information. You've dealt with a few more issues. What we will do is continue to do the follow-up work. In terms of process, it's always very good for the students who have worked through you, maybe they could just phone the department, you know, directly because we need . . . in order to do a thorough follow-up we need something in writing and we could have that arrangement with them. And I think in that way then we could, you know, follow up on the suggestions made.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll follow up and provide some contacts. But the students are finding out that by contacting my office they do have the opportunity to get some results whereas in the past, at certain times when they have contacted the minister's office, things seemed to have moved a little slower than perhaps the students would have liked. And by talking to our office, they have achieved the results that they have wanted.

Mr. Minister, school closures are a problem around the province. It's a problem because of the cut-backs in funding from your department to the various school boards who in turn cut back the funding to the schools, particularly the smaller schools. It's a problem with lower enrolments in some of the schools. So it's a combination of factors.

But the problems that arise with school closures is, in a lot of communities, the division boards do not pass on the proper information to the local communities so that the local communities can understand and appreciate exactly what is happening.

The Wood Mountain School has contacted me, and it's a situation there where the community has put together a set of numbers which would indicate that there is little or no savings in place for the division to close their school. Yet they have a great deal of difficulty in communicating with the division board for whatever reason that might be; in trying to reach an amiable solution to this problem.

I have a letter here which is — probably you received the same letter — from Kelly Fitzpatrick; also letters here from Mike Klein, who is a teacher at the Wood Mountain School and who is also the mayor of the community. And they have put together some numbers which would indicate that the school divisions in place there stand to lose money depending on what happens in those communities.

If they close the school, the student population is split; then either the school board will lose money because the students will go to separate school boards, different school boards. And yet they have a great deal of difficulty getting actual numbers for what the savings will be; what the costs are for that particular school in the school division.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing to allow communities to have access to the numbers that the communities need to be able to understand what is happening for their school and their community? I know that these numbers should be provided by the local division board. But in cases where the local division board is reluctant to provide that, Mr. Minister, what is the department prepared to do?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, in regards to the information base on school closures and the democratic process that occurs at the school division level, I think it's important to know that historically we've always had about 15 to 20 schools, you know, that have closed down in the province of Saskatchewan — this past year we've had 17 — and that decision is always made at the local and division board level. And I think it's important to recognize and respect the democracy in that sense.

Now, it's a lot similar to decision-making processes at municipalities as well. You have your elections at that level and the questions could be raised at board meetings, you know, that are held at the division board level, or raise these issues in relation to writing letters at that level. And I think those are probably just

as important ways in terms of access.

But I think the important point is that whereas we've looked at it historically — government used to control everything in regards to education before — we've left it to the autonomy of the school boards and we continue to respect that autonomy. And they have to get that information through the democratic process, you know, that is available for them at the school board level.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could provide me with a list of the schools that closed in the previous year and a list of the schools that are proposed for closure in the upcoming year.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We will provide that information at a later time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You talked about democracy in the process of school board elections and that the people represent the communities. Indeed they do. However, those elections are for three years as compared to the RM (rural municipality) elections which are . . . you have half of the board is up for election every year. So you can have a direct say on what is happening on your board every year on RM council which you do not have that opportunity on the school board divisions.

But we all know what happens with letter-writing. I'm sure your government is receiving a lot of letters on various pieces of legislation. That doesn't mean you provide the people with the information or that you change what you're doing. Obviously if you've received the copies of the letters that we have received dealing with the labour legislation and The Trade Union Act, you would have changed your mind — if the letters were having an effect.

(1615)

And the school boards are the same way. The ratepayers on the school board can write letters to the school board representatives, but if the representatives don't wish to change their mind or provide the information, there is no way that the ratepayers can force that information out of the school board.

And the people in the communities are being asked to agree to the closures of their schools, or at least to acquiesce without saying too much, when they're not being provided with the information that they need to make a proper judgement as to whether or not it's going to be of benefit financially or if it's going to be of benefit to their children. And that's the area that is lacking is that information being provided to the people.

Also when the schools are being closed, the communities have a great deal of concern as to what consideration is being given to the children who are being affected by this. Wood Mountain is a very good example because it is a significant distance away from

surrounding communities. How long a period of time are the children going to have to be on the school bus to reach another school? Do the children themselves not have some legal recourse, some legal right to expect that they will be in a position to study when they get to school because they haven't had to travel a considerable amount of distance on the bus?

The Minister of Education, at the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) convention last fall, said that in her mind students should not get on the bus before 7:30 in the morning because when they reach school after they've travelled for an hour to an hour and a half on the bus, the younger children are going to have a great deal of difficulty being awake in class, being able to concentrate, being able to study and to absorb the information that is being given to them.

In the case of Wood Mountain, those children will be pushing that 7:30 limit if not more, Mr. Minister. So what considerations are being given for the children that are going to be affected by this type of occurrence if the school closes in Wood Mountain?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think the important point to make is that while you in fact state that the elections at the school board level are three years, you've got to remember that in this legislature we're elected every four or five years. And the expectation that we have in regards to good political representation, such as yourself, in this legislature, there's probably very good political representation as well at the local school board level.

So that political process takes place, you know, in regards to school board levels right throughout the province. And I think it's important that the political democratic process that is held at the school board level continue in regards to board meetings, letters, etc., that I had mentioned before. So I think the question of accountability that you raise, you know, could be addressed more effectively there at the local level.

And also the overall time period that people spend on buses, etc., has always been an issue of discussion in this province. And I think that the existing situation in the province has been more or less considered relatively fair, you know, by the people of the province who have determined lengths and times and so on.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. The previous minister of Education brought in a Bill which amended The Education Act and made some changes to the process of closing a school. And I approached her at that time to allow some community input into that.

And I would ask, Mr. Minister, that you again review that situation to allow the communities to have a little more direct input into the closure of their schools; to allow the community to have some financial input, if that's their desire, to support a school within their community.

The Wood Mountain School — the comments from Mr. Klein state that in effect the maintenance costs are being shifted to bussing costs. So that would be the maintenance costs for operating the physical plant at the Wood Mountain School, those costs are simply being shifted now to bussing costs. And so there's really, according to his numbers, very little, if any, savings to be had in place. And so the community wonders, why are they closing our school when in actual fact they're going to save very little money.

When the item of a school closure comes forward, the community needs to have the ability, through The Education Act, to have some direct input into that.

Now I realize that there's two three-month periods of time, or two six-month periods of time — I'm not sure just exactly which one it is now — that a school division has to go through before they can close a school.

But some place within that process the community needs to have an opportunity to express themselves. They need to be given the opportunity to have the actual dollar numbers of what is happening, and they need to have some information on what impact this is going to have on their children.

Mr. Minister, will you, or are you, giving any consideration to this kind of a community input into the school closures issue?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Again as I mentioned before, there is opportunity for community input, and you've recognized that in your comments as well. And I think I've mentioned before that that type of political process, the democratic process at the local level, is best handled there. And I think what needs to happen is that they just have to, you know, continue and deal with their representatives and move forward in that fashion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I talked to the Minister of Education previously about this issue, but I wonder if you could provide an update on the 4-4-1 issue, dealing with bargaining units between the SSTA, the government, and the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation).

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, we had concluded an agreement in regards to 4-4-1, which was the policy, and we had made a joint agreement with SSTA, a protocol agreement — and as a matter of fact I was present at the signing of that protocol agreement and I think both sides were relatively happy about the protocol agreement — and so that position on 4-4-1 is the one that we had agreed upon.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Am I to assume then that 4-4-1 will be four SSTA, four government, and a chairman that would be agreeable to both groups?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — The legislation stands as it was on 4-4-1, and we had come out with, on that protocol agreement, you know, a decision where we would

have a joint process. And the key idea in there was the joint process. You know before that it was always considered a unilateral decision, you know, by government. Now we have a process where it is joint.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure that the SSTA will be happy about that because that is one of the issues that they were pursuing fairly vigorously.

I notice in the globals, Mr. Minister, that you made significant computer purchases in the last year. I don't have the total dollar figure for it handy, but there were considerable computers purchased. I was wondering why such a large number of computers purchased? Were they all tendered, and will this carry on again in the upcoming budgetary year?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to the new information technology system that was in place, it was basically dealing with ... and the improvement, of course, in the technology on computers, so that we could improve our correspondence in a school system as well as apprenticeship. And we felt that we needed to update, you know, our system. Of course it was tendered, and this is for this year and it would not continue for the following year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I could perhaps refer you to my comments last night, dealing with the minister of Gaming; I don't remember what portfolio he was dealing with last night there about computer purchases — SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), thank you member, SPMC — that you don't always necessarily have to go out and buy the latest and the best piece of equipment, that something down the line can still do the job. Now I'm not recommending that you go out and buy a bunch of 8088's, but you don't all need 586's either. So, Mr. Minister, when it comes to buying computers, I think you should buy what you need to do the job but don't buy in excess.

Mr. Minister, I notice in the globals that there is a significant number of committees in place within the Department of Education. What is the cost for all of these committees, and do they all have a time line in which to provide their reports, or are they ongoing committees that sort of grow like Topsy and never end?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, we'll get back to you on this issue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Could you please repeat that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We'll get back on this issue. I haven't got information right at hand.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I notice also in the globals that you did one survey by Environics in August 1993 for \$23,000. What was that for?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I've been told that there was a

global package that was provided for you. That information on Environics poll should be contained in that global document.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, we have the fact that the survey was there and that it cost \$23,000, but it doesn't explain what they did. What happened with this survey? What was it for? What kind of questions? What were the results?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Again we'll look into that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have another concern coming from a school division or people within a school division out west, Golden Prairie area. Is it possible for students to move within a division from school A to school B?

These people would like to move to another school within the division but are having a great deal of difficulty getting permission from the division board to do this, and they live right on the border of the two school districts. The fact is the gentleman was telling me that there's about two or three families involved in this, and the one family lives within a hundred yards of the boundary of the school divisions. And what the school division was trying to do was to move the school district boundary another mile away, so it would make it that much more difficult for them to argue that they should be going to the other school.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, in regards to your comments, the issue was within a school division. Again that lies within the realm of the local board or school division. It's between two boards, and there's always . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's the same division.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — You're saying within the same division? Yes, it still has to be handled at the local level. There's always a continuous problem on areas. It's like constituency boundaries. The town at the edge of the boundary should be on this constituency or that constituency; it should be on this school board or that school board. And it's always, you know, a decision that is made, and I think we will always have that as a problem. And I think we try and leave it to the democratic process of the local boards and elections for that decision to be made there.

(1630)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I realize it's an ongoing problem, but it's a serious concern to those parents that are involved in it and they would like to have some avenue to move their concerns forward and to apply some pressure on the division board to allow them to have a move.

Talking about the division boards, I've received a large number of letters from the various division boards around the province with concerns about the budgetary process and the actual number of dollars they're receiving from the Department of Education and the manner in which it is going to affect their own

decisions. I have a letter here from Saskatchewan Valley School Division No. 49, which is up in the Warman area, and I'd read a paragraph from their letter:

Sure, our board had to reduce staff — 10 teachers in each of 1993 and '94, reduce program support, band, industrial arts, home economics, cut back on purchase of new buses — but the part that really hurts is all of the increases that have been passed on to the board by other government agencies. Some examples are UIC and CPP increases of 8 per cent, heating fuel costs of 12 per cent, and teacher salary costs of two and a half per cent.

Mr. Minister, what is your department doing to try and lessen the impacts of your government's decisions on the various school boards? They mention the heating costs. There's also telephone, taxes on fuel, which will increase the cost of bussing; the education and health tax, E&H tax; the provincial sales tax up by 2 per cent since you become government. All of these costs greatly add to the burden that school divisions face and the net result of those added burdens are the closures of schools such as Wood Mountain.

Mr. Minister, what do you and your department do to try and lessen the impacts that your government's utility and tax policies have on these school divisions?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think in regards to the traditional process on budgets, a lot of the school boards were very happy that we had moved from the year-by-year basis system that had been there before. And we had given advance notice for a couple of years so that they can do forward planning. And many of the school boards throughout this province saw that as a welcome advantage in regards to planning in their own areas. And we've gotten a lot of good, positive feedback on it.

The other thing that was very important is that in regards to costs, we knew that the costs on payment to teachers was relatively high. And in our budgetary process we have gotten the costs covered, you know, through the province by 75 per cent. And that again came to be a very important gain for the people at the local level. And I think that these two aspects have been something that they said that were very good, strong measures that the government had brought in.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It doesn't exactly say what you're doing to aid the divisions with the increases in utility and tax rates. And the fact is your providing them with the information in advance as to what the grant structure is going to be or what the decreases to their funding is going to be is like cutting the collar off the man before he is guillotined. At least he knows he's going to be guillotined. And if you give him a date, I'm sure that he's very happy to know that it'll be next week or the week after that. But at the end of the day, his head is still cut off.

And so while you have given the date and how much

money the decreases are going to be to the school boards, to the division boards, I'm sure they're not very happy — in fact I know they're not happy — about the decreases in funding to them. And they're also very unhappy about the increased costs.

I have another school division that writes in. And this is from the Paynton, Unity, and Wilkie areas. It says:

1. All teachers and librarians are gone due to budget cuts. So much for resource-based learning.
2. School-based budgets are at a 10-year low. Programs and resource materials will be cut back. Professional development will be cut back.
3. Reduced maintenance budgets cannot be a long-term measure.
4. Surplus cannot be used to balance budgets for many years.
5. All we have left to cut is professional staff and programs.

Well, Mr. Minister, what are you doing to provide a proper education to the children of the communities when this is the kind of results that are coming from your telling the school divisions that we're going to cut this much this year and this much next year and so much the year after that?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well I know that the member wasn't around when I was in opposition, and we raised all these issues in regards to the opposite view. One was, if you're asked for money, you just give it out. And money was, you know, being given out all over the province during that time, and we ended up having a \$15 billion debt in this province, and we now have interest payments of \$850 million.

We tried to do as best as possible given the limitations that we were faced. And I'll say it again, the basic concern that people had was, on a year-to-year budgeting basis, it was very difficult to do planning. When we introduced the measures that we did, we provided them two years in advance. And I say again, a lot of the boards welcomed that decision, and I think that overall the help that we provided them on the teachers, on 75 per cent, etc., I think was important in this province. So we've gotten of course statements on other matters, but overall people sense the fact that they could do more forward planning in regards to education in this province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. You mentioned while you were in opposition — I've looked over some of the quotes from the current government members while they sat in opposition; and I certainly don't remember ever finding a quote where you were calling on the government to cut back on education spending. I can recall a good many quotes calling for more and more and more spending.

The fact is, the Minister of Education was complaining to the then-minister of Education about only getting a 3 per cent increase for education — not a 4 per cent cut, Mr. Minister, but a 3 per cent increase. And that's what your opposition was calling for — that 3 per cent increase was not enough — and demanding, more and more and more money be spent on education.

I'd like to go on to another issue, Mr. Minister, and that's dealing with division amalgamations. And I have a letter here from the Oxbow School Division commenting on amalgamations:

With regard to school amalgamations we have submitted a joint application with the Arcola School Division to participate in the pilot project recently announced by the Minister of Education.

As stated previously, we are already sharing services with the Arcola School Division and talks for further sharing of services are ongoing.

Mr. Minister, where and at what stage are your pilot projects for amalgamations?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to the process, what we will be doing in regards to amalgamations is that we have been accepting proposals from the different divisions and boards, and we will be . . . those proposals will be examined by an inter-agency committee. And we expect that we should have a handle in regards to the decision by mid-June.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. That's all the questions I have today. I look forward to receiving all of the information that you have indicated you will provide us, and I would like to thank you and your officials for coming in.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, it is interesting to note that there's actually less money in the budget for universities, for aboriginal and northern education, and for literacy, apprenticeship, and adult education.

Can the minister explain how this is consistent with the approach of adequately preparing those most in need of skills for the future employment markets; what improvements and modifications have been made to programs to deliver these services more effectively to greater numbers of people needing them?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think we have made our positions known in regards to the planning process in regards to questions raised by the previous member. And we tried to give a forward plan for the universities as well as the other programs relating to aboriginal people, and also dealing with literacy.

I might add that on the question of aboriginal people, I look back at the whole history of the province of Saskatchewan. When the Liberal government was around in the '60s and early '70s, there was no special programming for aboriginal people — absolutely nothing existed. When the NDP government came

into power in the '70s, many of the programs that we now see as the essence of programing for Indian and Metis people were created during the time the NDP government was around.

We started looking at such programs in the province, you know, arose the Indian teacher education program; there was the native law program in the province of Saskatchewan which graduates 80 per cent of all Indian and Metis and Inuit lawyers across Canada. We had a system where we had set up southern urban native teacher education program. We had NORTEP (northern teacher education program) teacher education program. We had Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. And so a lot of the programing that was done for Indian and Metis people were started when an NDP government was there.

And as we look back in history, we have continued to support these programs. And even in my own area up in northern Saskatchewan where there was only about five people that were of Indian and Metis ancestry in the schools, now we have approximately 150, you know, that are graduated and teaching in the schools of northern Saskatchewan. So as a government, we've always been known to provide the leadership in this direction right across Canada.

And I think it's become well-known and appreciated, and I think as we move forward definitely, we had some decision-makings on tough times when we had to deal with the mismanagement of the budget by the previous government.

But I think with the forward planning that is out there, with the fact that there was lead time in regards to making, you know, the tough decisions that needed to be made, I respect, you know, the fact that the proper choices were probably made in regards to trying to keep the best of what existed in the province of Saskatchewan, whether it was at the universities or the Indian and Metis programs or literacy and so on.

So we have tried our best in living up and trying to get the best of programing, you know, given the tremendous budget situation that we were in.

Mrs. Bergman: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not sure that you as NDP government can claim all you were claiming because this sort of work . . . I agree Saskatchewan has been in the forefront, but it has gone on under other governments besides yourself.

What I'm asking about is what is happening now not only with the aboriginal programs, but with the apprenticeship programs, with the technical schools, with the universities? How is this budget cut affecting them and what is this forward-looking plan that you have talked about?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I guess the issue of quality education in this province has been well-known, you know, across Canada. And we have excellent people

at the university, the technical institutes, you know, the boards in this province, and I know that they've been thoroughly involved in many aspects of the educational process and especially the interconnection between education and jobs and the apprenticeship area.

And I know that I have a lot of respect in the decision-making process that they will have made the right decisions in regards to that interconnection. And I believe that what they have done so far, from what we have gathered, has been again an excellent basis of decision given the tough situation.

And I might add that on the apprenticeship side in northern Saskatchewan development, we had a \$10.5 million announcement this year on northern training. What had happened in the past that many of the people had gotten the labour and other jobs which was very important for northern development, as well as getting the mill operators and so on, but there have been relatively few in the apprenticeship area on electricians and also industrial mechanics and heavy duty mechanics and so on, and the carpenters. And what we have said this past year . . . we redeveloped the programing so we are targeting those areas.

We are moving . . . and as a matter of fact we used to have lesser amount of programing in the Athabasca region and the very, very far North, and we have gotten programing decentralized to that level. So we're moving in on apprenticeship field so that . . . there used to be about 15 per cent employment of people in northern Saskatchewan at the mines with the previous government. We now average up to 40 per cent, 600 workers out there, and many of them are now moving into the apprenticeship trades.

So we are trying to get this in the places of need, and I'm sure that the institutions in the South have done much the same as we have done in joint planning with them.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, I'm glad you have confidence in what's going on, but what I was asking about is an overall plan on the departmental level, and perhaps we can get back to that from another context. According to the budget, overall there's less money being put in the student partnership-student employment program. Can the minister explain the basis for that decision and articulate what steps have been taken to increase access to employment for students this year?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to access, we have looked at the number of jobs. And last year we had approximately a couple of thousand and this year we will have about 2,700. There is a basic subsidy for the businesses in that regard. So we're up, you know, from where we were at last year.

Mrs. Bergman: — I'm not sure how that coordinates with what the budget said about being less in the student partnership-student employment program. Can you tell me about that?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Basically the subsidy before was \$2 per student. It was dropped down to \$1.20. Then what happened is that we did a lot more intensive planning with the business community in making sure that the access, you know, by students would be there. And we had a tremendous response from the business community. And you know, they have worked with us in making sure that the students in this province, you know, could have jobs. So that's where the increase came from, about 2,000 to 2,700.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you provide an analysis of the numbers of people receiving education through our post-secondary programs who actually end up pursuing careers after graduation out of province?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I don't have that specific information right now, but we'll get back to you on that.

Mrs. Bergman: — I would appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Can you tell us what the department's position is on charging tuition for extracurricular activities within the K to 12 school programs?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — That is a school board decision.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, there appears to be some movement in Saskatchewan towards private schools. I'm interested in knowing how the department's long-term plan addresses the continued emergence of private schools in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We've had a policy development process, you know, this past year in regards to the independent schools. And we did outline a process, you know, with them. And my understanding is at the last meeting it was more or less fairly well received.

Mrs. Bergman: — I understand you have a process, Mr. Minister, but do you have a vision or any idea where this is going? Private schools seem to be popping up. What is the department's vision for what will come of this?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I mean, there's always been a concern over the history of education. Initially the school system was fairly public. It was not formal as it developed.

Then a lot of the private school systems came into being. During that time in history only the rich were able to access the educational system. And as such, a lot of the people during that historical period asked for public school system wherein everybody could go to school whether you were rich or whether you were poor.

And with that, that vision was established a long time ago. And we continue that vision of having high quality publicly controlled schools in the province of Saskatchewan. At the same time, we had respected the developments of independent schools in the process, you know, from where the policy had been developed this past year. And I think that we had a

certain degree of flexibility in that regard.

But overall, I think the public sees us continuing with a public educational system publicly controlled. And it's not to be absolutist in a sense wherein there is flexibility for independent schooling as well.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You mentioned a process that you put together about private schools. Is that written down? Is that available?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, we'll provide you with that document.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. With respect to local school closures, what criteria do you use to assess the viability of a school? How does your department determine whether the school remains open or closes?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We don't make that decision. That decision is made at the board level.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, is there any sort of guideline from the departments on the per-pupil cost factor to local school boards to give them some sort of framework for their decisions?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I'm sure that individual boards will have excellent criteria in regards to making a decision, you know, before they do the school closures. But those criteria are available at the board level. If you wanted to have requests, you know, to the board in regards to what criteria they can use, I suppose as a public person you could probably do that.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm interested in knowing where the game plan is for school district amalgamation. There seems to be some confusion between the department and local school districts as to whether this is indeed a desirable or a necessary outcome. Can you tell us where, in your vision of the direction of education for the province, where we are going with school board amalgamation and why?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — When we looked at that issue last year — and we had waited for the political process that took place, you know, with the schools and the trustees — we have come out with a system that was different from the processes in the East and also in Alberta. And rather than going through on a process of doing something immediately, we said, let's go through a process of consultation and a voluntary process with the school divisions. And that's a type of process, you know, that we have started.

And as I mentioned to the other member, we see that this will require proposals from the divisions and boards and what happens is that there will be a committee that reviews that. And the decision, as I said before, would probably come in around mid-June.

Mrs. Bergman: — How long do you project that it will

take for the voluntary amalgamation game to play out? What leadership is your department showing in terms of a vision for the delivery of education services in the long term?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think what we wanted to do in regards to our difference with . . . our different policy from the Conservative government in Alberta, we wanted to see what the results were in regards to quality education. I mean the basics of any decision is quality education and what impact it has, you know, for the children.

And we also wanted to look at the impact it would have financially, basically because, you know, that was a major issue that this government has stood for, for some time.

So it was a combination of those two main factors that we looked at in regards to the issue of amalgamation, and we will therefore be watching very, very carefully in regards to what will actually happen in the process because it's always good to, rather than try and work it from a simple theoretical level at what it ought to be, it's better to work it out from the practice and the practical amalgamation processes that occurs here in the province. And when that happens, then we can make the decision properly.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is it true that 12 Kindersley students are currently attending an Alberta school? Can you explain why this is, and can you offer the rationale on the part of your department in funding this situation?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to the students at Kindersley, it's true that there are 12 students from the western edge of Kindersley school district attending school at Empress, Alberta. Now Kindersley is being fair in its tuition offerings and they could probably insist on students attending Saskatchewan schools. Kindersley and the Alberta division need to work out an acceptable solution, and these are the points in regards to that solution; so that Saskatchewan students don't spend too long on the buses is one other issue. The other one is that these students not be seen to be an expense to the Alberta system, and the school at Empress be closed or kept open without consideration of the Saskatchewan students as the determining factor.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me how long the bus ride is for those 12 children?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Not at this time. I'll get back to you on that one.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I understand there is a committee to develop policy and practice guidelines for children with behaviour disorders, conduct disorders, and emotional disturbances.

Mr. Minister, I've worked in this area for 25 years, and I'm very concerned about this. Is there a target date for this committee, and if so, what is that date? If not, is

there . . . why is there no time line for its reporting? And will the committee be addressing the need for preschool preventive programs?

(1700)

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We are doing this in a broader context of our child action plan, and there will be an interdepartmental approach to this issue. A lot of the people had, you know, provided the fact that we needed to work together in a coordinated effort basically because one department or another was unable to resolve this issue throughout history. And I think . . . we will try and get back to you on the specific information of a time line on it. We are unable to ascertain exactly how long it will take at this time, and we'll try and get back to you on this, on the time line issue, later.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. As I said, I'm very concerned about this area because of the implications for prevention as well as treatment and the whole issue of interdepartmental cooperation. I know it's been struggled with between the three departments for at least the 25 years I've been working in the field.

I'm concerned as well with the percentage of high school graduates that are returning for upgrading after grade 12 graduation. Can you advise me what study has been made of the number of graduated students that re-enter the high school system for upgrading?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I don't have the exact number with me right now but I think we're looking at it in a context of lifelong learning. There are some people who had initially dropped out of school, you know, and have come back, and I think it's very important for us when they're motivated and interested to come back to school. We know that from a teaching-learning situation, you know, motivation is an important part of success. And in this context I think we're trying to work with them and address and support them in this sense.

Mrs. Bergman: — Well, Mr. Minister, those are not the students I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the drop-outs. I'm talking about the graduates who are coming back into high school after they graduate to apparently upgrade their skills. Can you give us any idea what changes are being made to the system to ensure that those young people who graduate from high school have adequate entry level for further training and post-secondary education?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think there is always impact on decision making on what the university decides, you know, on what grade point averages are required in different colleges. And if a particular student wants to get into medicine that student requires a certain average, or if a student wants to get into education they require a certain average and so on.

So sometimes the students who may have a decent average may still want to upgrade their area in science because they may have felt that their science mark

was not as good because of the area that they wanted to enter in. So they make the individual decision themselves to come back to school and retake some of these classes and improve their averages so that they can move forward to the university level.

So it's done on an individual decision-making level at that time. And the teachers, I think, try as best as they could to see that because they recognize that the motivation is relatively high for students who do that, and I think in many cases, though the decision-making process is individual.

Mrs. Bergman: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm concerned that there may be a larger problem here, and I wondered if the department is doing any kind of assessment or study of this phenomenon which seems to have cropped up in the last few years. I know that when I went to high school, people didn't go back to high school; they went on to whatever programs and training programs. And I feel that there may be an issue here or issues. Is the department studying this one?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, I guess we are in a sense, you know, providing the space for them in coming back to school and getting them to improve their own level. In regards to impact, we will be monitoring the situation to see what it indeed requires and what type of action needs to happen in the future.

Mrs. Bergman: — So you're saying, at this moment there isn't a particular study going on of that phenomenon.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think, you know, it will fluctuate in regards to what happens on university entrance requirements. And all we can do at the present time is provide, you know, those spaces for those students, and we leave it up to the excellent teachers who are working with them to try and do their best in the areas that they are interested in. But as I said, we will continue to monitor it.

As far as trying to get a budget on mid-stream on a study, you know, it would be a cost item, etc., and I feel that the regular monitoring that is done and the feedback, you know, that we do get from the teachers out there I think is sufficient. So we'll be seeing what happens in the future.

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.

Could you tell me where your department made its share of these savings last year, and where you intend to make the savings this year?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — The department's share is about 630,000.

Mrs. Bergman: — I understand the amount, but how did you go about making these savings?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — There's all kinds of administrative efficiencies — rents, etc., and that type of thing, but those are all nitty-gritty items. But it's basically administrative efficiencies.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, in 1993 you had full-time equivalents of 495.3 in your department. The 1994 *estimates* reflect an estimated 484 full-time equivalents. Can you explain what the objective was in eliminating those positions, and how it was decided which positions would be cut or eliminated? And can you give some idea of how this will serve to deliver services more effectively?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I mean this government has looked at administrative efficiencies throughout the system, and this has gone in regards to administrative costs, and it has impacted personnel at strategic levels. And everybody knows that we do have . . . There is an expectation out there to cut in the area of administration and that's what we have done. I mean that's all I can really say.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could you give us the cost of the severance packages issued to those, approximately 11 employees.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We've had 11 positions cut, and the total severance packages was approximately \$50,000.

Mrs. Bergman: — Are you saying that's the total severance package for all 11 positions?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Out of the 11 only 2 were severance packages, so the total amount for severance packages was 50,000.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I've been contacted by individuals from all over the province when they don't get results from government ministers and agencies, and I'd like to ask you a few questions that pertain to your department that have come to me in this way.

My first question is regarding the High School Review Advisory Committee and the issue of high school English credit requirements. What is your current position and that of your department regarding this proposal?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — We still haven't made a final decision so the existing situation stands and we'll let the public know at the point when we make that decision.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. The concerned teachers of Moose Jaw have written to you several times. This group forecasts that if the committee recommendations are adopted, the following will very likely result: (1) it will be impossible to maintain current standards of achievement in communication

skills; (2) Saskatchewan level of literacy will decline; (3) deeper divisions in society will be created as the gap between skilled communicators and weak communicators increases; and (4) the study of literature, especially Canadian literature, will be slashed.

What response do you have to this group's concern?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well we appreciate the concern. We've had that information from Moose Jaw; we've had information from throughout the province. We've had information dealing with all subject matter areas. And we appreciate the tremendous concern that people have in regards to our total educational process as well as in English, and we will be taking this into consideration when we make our decision.

(1715)

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I look forward to your decision on this matter.

I have a letter from an individual I'll identify only as student loan account 1641660. This young woman is a U of S (University of Saskatchewan) graduate from the College of Nursing. She is now living in the United States due to the lack of employment opportunities for young nurses in this province.

This young woman has been making payments toward a student loan of \$9,000 for two years and she has managed to pay off \$2,700 of it already. Yet her account was turned over to a collection agency that is harassing her and her family. The collection agency has told her that they will accept payments but will pursue her for the full amount as they only get their commission on the full payment. Could you please commit to me that you will look into this situation and report back to me? I will send you a copy of her letter now.

Perhaps though you could today advise me what your department's policy is regarding contracting out of collection services.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — You have provided me with a specific issue and a specific person. Just provide us with that information after and we'll do some follow-up work on it.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, could you outline for me your department's policy on the contracting out of collection services?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — The policy is that we tender out the process and we . . . before we do that we have our own process of trying to collect. And after a certain time period and so on, and after certain attempts, then the agency is then brought in.

Mrs. Bergman: — I appreciate your looking into this particular situation and I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, and to your officials for the questions you answered.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 5 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Loans, Advances and Investments
Education, Training and Employment
Vote 141**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 141 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I would like to thank my officials. We've had Ken Horsman and Lily Stonehouse, Jim Benning, and Robin Johnson. And I'd also like to thank the members from across in regards to their questions today.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m.