

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 10, 1995

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, and urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime control are not synonymous.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Carnduff, Carievale, Gainsborough, south-east Saskatchewan. I so lay them on the Table.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition. The prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, and urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime control are not synonymous.

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

Mr. Speaker, we have a full page of names here, and they're from my community of Shaunavon.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this morning to present on behalf of the people from the Gull Lake area a petition with regards to Highway No. 1. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And I'm happy to lay these on the Table this morning, Mr.

Speaker, for the people from the Gull Lake constituency and area.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to oppose changes to federal legislation regarding firearm ownership.

And of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

And of member shareholders of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool petitioning the Assembly to require the directors of the Pool to seek the approval of the Pool membership by a vote before the proposed changes to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool are enacted by the Assembly.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act respecting the Property Rights of the People of Saskatchewan.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two constituents of mine sitting in your gallery. To my left is Val Wiebe, my constituency assistant, and her husband John. Please welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House a constituent of mine who is seated up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Michael Stasiuk. Michael is a constituent of mine, a friend of mine, and a farmer from the Canora area. And Michael is on his way home today from Calgary where he was out visiting his son who is attending university there.

And Michael has taken some time out of his journey home to take in the proceedings of the House here today. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all the members to offer Michael a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Search and Rescue Organization

Mr. Kowalsky: — Saskatchewan still has places very close to populated areas where individuals can easily be lost, sometimes with tragic consequences. We were all reminded of this last July with the fruitless search for Ashley Krestianson in the Tisdale area.

To prevent a similar occurrence, a group of Prince Albert area citizens is forming a volunteer search and rescue organization. They plan to call the group the P.A. (Prince Albert) North Search and Rescue. The purpose of this group will be to be prepared to assist the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and local officials in the search for missing and lost persons in rural areas.

The Prince Albert RCMP detachment, local Environment and Resource department officials, and the RMs (rural municipalities) surrounding Prince Albert have all expressed their support for the plan.

Sergeant Wasylenska of the RCMP said this is an excellent example of community policing. Without assistance from civilians, the work of the police is that much tougher. These people will be an excellent resource for us.

The RCMP will train the local volunteers and the group itself will raise funds to equip itself.

Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent example of people joining hands for the security of their families and their neighbours. I congratulate Mr. Nick Czychowski for his community service, and I congratulate all the volunteers who have taken the initiative to set up the P.A. North Search and Rescue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Role Model Program

Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our education system is constantly changing and growing with the times. Today I wish to report on some recent events in Saskatoon that demonstrate how these changes are benefiting young children.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon's inner-city schools have joined forces with the Saskatoon City Police to initiate a school role model program. Over the past few months, and in future weeks as well, school children will receive visits from famous Canadian aboriginals. The guiding theme behind these visits is that if kids wish to follow in the footsteps of their role models, they must continue in their education.

An example of some of the events happening as part of the program took place at St. Mary's Community School last night. There, children were thrilled to meet Tina Keeper, star of CBC's (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) gritty but realistic drama *North of Sixty*. Ms. Keeper is a gifted actress and a great inspiration to children. Her visit follows one by Gordon Tootosis, a Saskatchewan-born actor who is also a star of *North of Sixty*.

This month, Mr. Speaker, the focus of the program will shift to literacy and the fine arts. Some of the scheduled visits are from well-known aboriginal author Frida Ahenakew, and painter Alan Sapp. Truly, Mr. Speaker, children are our future.

I wish to commend the Saskatoon City Police, Saskatoon's community schools, and the aboriginal community for their efforts in ensuring that future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal Government Defending Canadian Resources

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to state my approval for the federal government's stance to defend our east-coast fishermen and our fish stock. It's time that European fishermen stopped pillaging Canadian waters and be held responsible for breaking regulations in place to protect our ocean resources.

In light of the moves by the European Union to impose sanctions on Canada for defending the earth's resources and eastern Canadians, Canada should consider some form of economic retaliation comparable to that imposed by the Europeans. One form could be imposing a ban on European wines.

I must say that it's interesting that the federal government is anxious to defend eastern Canadian people on resources. I would hope they share the same enthusiasm in defending the needs and interests of western Canadians as well. Presently, Mr. Speaker, railroad strikes are hindering the transportation of grain to export, some of which is grown in the Souris-Cannington constituency.

Is the federal government going to allow these strikes to continue until August so that western Canadian producers will have to pay the full cost of shipping their grain to market, thereby saving the federal government the Crow rate on grain still on the farms? I should hope not. But unfortunately western Canada has not received a fair shake from the federal government to date.

It's time the provincial government pressed the federal government for a fair shake for Saskatchewan, and I urge the members opposite to discuss this matter immediately with the federal Transport minister and demand action. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Procrastination Week

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, yesterday my seat mate, the member for Humboldt, gave notice that he intended to make a statement about National Procrastination Week today, but apparently he's not here yet. And I know he'd been working on it all week, Mr. Speaker, and just hadn't finished it off yesterday. But actually, Mr. Speaker, he and I had intended to work on a statement recognizing National

Procrastination Week for last year but somehow we forgot it. As we procrastinators like to say, better late than never unless never is the more preferred option, and it usually is.

What are some of the things that we can do to honour National Procrastination Week, Mr. Speaker? Well unfortunately we just haven't gotten around to thinking about that yet. But each year National Procrastination Week seems to creep up faster than the one before, and all of a sudden we realize we've done nothing to prepare for it, and then the week is just about over.

Perhaps in the future, Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly might want to do some brainstorming for National Procrastination Week. But seeing as how this year's week is already past, we wouldn't have to worry about that for some time. After all, Mr. Speaker, we legislators have our own procrastinating motto: don't put off until tomorrow what you can put off until the day after, unless of course you can get leave and move a motion to adjourn debate indefinitely.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I know if the member from Humboldt were able to be here by now that he'd want to give notice that next year we'll talk about this again or maybe the year after that, I'm not sure. But anyhow, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I just want to remind the member from Moose Jaw Palliser — and I will not procrastinate — that you should not refer to the presence or absence of a member in this House. And not to procrastinate any longer, oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation of Justice Minister

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, two weeks ago I brought to your attention a serious error that was made by your deputy minister in his handling of the investigation into the former Justice minister. In turning the case over to the independent investigator, Mr. Cotter provided Justice McIntyre with completely erroneous information about the history of these types of cases in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, you had indicated to this Assembly that you would investigate the matter and decide the appropriate action that must be taken. Mr. Minister, can you inform this Assembly about the results of your investigation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well one can understand, Mr. Speaker, perhaps why some of these issues are being raised. Jobs I can see is not a subject you want to talk about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I can recall a day when members opposite were in office when the job figures were a regular Friday morning question. Not any more. They don't want to talk about the budget and so on.

Let me say with respect to the misinformation which was in the letter, I have received a report on the matter. The mistake was made innocently in an . . . I may say as well it was a very high profile mistake, but it was made innocently. The individual involved has been reprimanded, and that's probably an appropriate disposition of the matter.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that the minister talks about jobs and maybe a thorough investigation would just create another job or two for the people in this province.

Mr. Minister, your deputy minister provided the independent investigator, Justice McIntyre, with information that was completely false. If it had not been detected, it could have seriously biased the outcome of the investigation. And Mr. Cotter's actions were a deliberate attempt to mislead or a gross incompetence. Either way, a serious error was made, and you simply brushed it off.

Mr. Minister, was the mistake a result of incompetence or a deliberate attempt to mislead . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I think the member is out of line when he infers or, you know, says that an official or a member is deliberately misleading this . . . the minister. And I ask him to please refrain from doing so.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this side of the House and many people in this province want to know what actions you have taken, whether or not you have given a thorough . . . an opportunity for investigation and whether or not Mr. Cotter will be treated like any other individual across this province would be treated under similar circumstances. What actions have been taken?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite truly are short of question period material when you allege that there may be some sort of nefarious plot behind this error.

I think the comment of the deputy attorney general spoke for themselves when he said that surely if we were going to attempt to mislead someone, you wouldn't do so in such a high profile fashion.

I say to members opposite, it was apparent that it was a . . . it was apparent to any fair-minded person — I exclude members opposite — it was apparent to any fair-minded person that it was an innocent mistake. It was brought to the attention of the individual involved, and I think that is indeed an appropriate disposition of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Advertising Agency Political Contributions

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for government advertising.

Mr. Minister, Phoenix Advertising does about one and a half million dollars worth of business a year with your government. This morning on CBC Radio the president of Phoenix was quoted as saying that political contributions are, and I quote, a common part of the cost of doing business with your government.

That's an incredible statement, Mr. Minister. When you start to consider contributions to the NDP (New Democratic Party) as part of the cost of doing . . . getting government business, that, Mr. Minister, is called a kickback.

Mr. Minister, now that we know political contributions to the NDP is the cost of doing business from your government, could you tell us what's the going rate? And how much does it cost to get a cut of your government's advertising business?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to the member opposite. And it's really quite amazing how he can't separate himself from the 1980s; because what he's talking about is the kind of situation that existed here in the 1980s under the administration of which he was on the front benches.

I want to say again, as I have said in this House before, that the way that advertising services are allocated under this government's administration is by a tendering process. There are some 14 different advertising firms who do business with this government; that Phoenix is one of them; Cooper Quine & Fraser are another; Brown & Associates are another. All three of them do about an equal amount of business, and there are many others who do some business as well — after tendering, Mr. Speaker.

So the member should forget about the past and recognize the improvements and the reforms that have been made which have made the future so much better.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, I don't know how more current I can be than this morning's CBC Radio that said, a common part of the cost of doing business with your government . . . is a quote from Mr. Barker.

Even though an NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) has been convicted of fraud for receiving a kickback, Mr. Minister, the president of Phoenix Advertising still considers it a political contribution and a legitimate cost of doing business with your government.

The message isn't getting through, Mr. Minister — there's something wrong here. This was not a legitimate political contribution. A judge has determined it was illegal. And that's why your member was convicted.

Mr. Minister, why don't you come clean? How widespread is

this practice of political contributions in return for government business, and why are you afraid to hold an independent investigation of Phoenix Advertising?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, there is no requirement to do business with the government that there be political contributions. If that was so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain whether that's the principle that applied to the Conservative government when Canadian Pacific contributed \$64,000 and Molson companies, 24,000 and Toronto Dominion Bank, 37,000.

Part of democracy, Mr. Speaker, is that people who are in business and individuals make contributions to political parties to make democracy work. There shouldn't be one rule for the private sector and another rule that contributes to Conservatives and another rule for somebody else.

But the more important point, Mr. Speaker, is that all of the work that is being done for advertising with this government is tendered and it is awarded on the basis of the tendering, not like it used to be under the former administration where it was allocated only to two firms that were spin-offs of the Conservative Party who got 97 per cent of the advertising at that time.

I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that has changed under this administration. It has changed for the better because we have a system that is based on tendering.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, apparently the member opposite doesn't agree with the judge. Mr. Minister, Graham Barker of Phoenix Advertising said he considers political contributions to be a common part of the cost of doing business with your government. And he said that, Mr. Minister. How come, Mr. Minister? How common are these kickbacks? What other companies give you political contributions in returning business with your government? Who else is soliciting favours from you? Is this how your union leader buddies got you to sign that obscene union preference policy?

Mr. Minister, exactly how common is this preference to kickbacks in your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Morse continues to build on the circus. First of all I want to say that the CBC report was inaccurate, and now the member himself has put his own interpretation on a CBC report . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I will have to ask the members in the opposition, particularly one member, to please just tone it down a bit. We would like to hear the questions and the answers.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, my fear is that another member of the same caucus will get up and even put a different spin on it than the member from Morse has.

But I want to come back to my basic answer that I have been giving here. In the 1980s under the former administration, all of the work for advertising was given to two firms which are friends of the Conservative Party. No tendering. And if there was some tendering, I challenge the member from Morse to stand up and give us some documentation that shows that there was.

In this administration the work that is allocated to a large number of advertising firms is done through a tendering process. I don't apologize for that, Mr. Speaker, because that's the right way for it to be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agreement with Rural Health Coalition

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has no plan for health care, no plan for the welfare of rural Saskatchewan. Recently a director of the rural health care coalition contacted member communities to get an update on whether the services agreed to in the rural health care coalition agreement were now in place.

The answers are coming in and, Mr. Speaker, this government should be embarrassed. The overwhelming response is the agreement is being ignored. Again we see the government break their promise.

Mr. Minister, your government hasn't kept its word and lived up to this rural health care coalition agreement signed over a year ago. Did you purposely negotiate in bad faith with these rural communities, having no intention of living up to the spirit and the intent of the rural health care coalition agreement?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say directly to the member's question, in the vast, vast majority of communities the agreement that we signed with the Rural Health Coalition is being implemented, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little about credibility, and in doing so talk about . . . you will recall, Mr. Speaker, I took notice of a question yesterday, brought to the House by the Liberal leader. In this House yesterday, the Liberal leader made the accusation that people were being removed from the waiting-lists for orthopedic surgery in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Royce Gill says today, and I quote: "That's false information." False information.

Mr. Speaker, to suggest that the Liberal leader and the Liberal caucus should suggest in this House that individuals have been

removed from the waiting-list in Regina, Mr. Speaker, is a blatant falsehood, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I want to warn the member from Shaunavon, if he wants to ask another question he'd better abide by the rules of this House. The minister was on his feet, and I will determine when the time has come for the next question, not the member from Shaunavon.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I'd like to say two other things. This leader, this Liberal caucus and this leader, has been wrong on the jobs issue when they brought it to the House. They've changed their position all over the place on the Crow issue and in agriculture. Their information brought to this House on health care is false.

Mr. Speaker, now let me say finally, let me say finally that I think it does a disservice to use fearmongering tactics with people on waiting-lists to try and score political points in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister is afraid of the question because he didn't get anywhere near it with an answer.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement has been ignored by this government and the people are fed up. The rural health care coalition from the community of Vanguard writes, and I quote:

In our community no parts of the agreement have been fully implemented. It is felt that the provisions of adequate emergency care has still not been provided.

The community of Ituna says: we still have no 24-hour emergency service. And the list goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, you are able to take immediate action in telling folks not to release information, but during this past year there have been court actions and pressures by communities to force your government to live up to this agreement. Will you stand in this House today and promise the people of rural Saskatchewan that you will immediately take action and fulfil your promises in this agreement?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to join us in estimates and we can walk thoroughly through the rural health care coalition in a matter of moments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member says that people of the province are fed up. They are fed up, Mr. Speaker, they are fed up with that leader and that caucus not knowing where they stand on issues, not knowing where they stand on agricultural issues — the Crow rate, the flip-flop there — where they stand on the job figures, where they stand on gun control, Mr. Speaker. And then they come to the House with false information, false information, trying to fearmonger among the people of Saskatchewan for their own political benefit.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, that member should stand up now and apologize on behalf of his leader.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, you have been telling us all week that all the financial statements of each district are public information. Yet we are told by many districts that we have to use the freedom of information Act to obtain the truth.

Now the Premier has become involved. Yesterday he stated on a Yorkton radio show that the numbers we obtained were phoney. The Premier's view of the truth is a poor one, Mr. Speaker. These numbers were obtained from a handful of health districts who are open enough to release their statements for the last fiscal year — his own boards.

Local people are complaining as well. The coalition from Climax states, and I quote:

The board is very tight-lipped about everything. We do not get any information on anything publicly until it's done.

Mr. Minister, obviously you gave instructions to local boards about sharing public information. Why have you told them to release nothing until after the election, when it will be too late to stop the devastation that your government has created on rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member gets up and talks about false information. The leader of his party, the woman who would be premier of Saskatchewan, comes into this House yesterday and — not according to myself or to members of the government, but according to Mr. Royce Gill — says, and I quote: "That's false information." To suggest that people have been removed by, in her words, bureaucrats, from waiting-lists, Mr. Speaker, is false information.

And again I say, if that member wants to regain a little credibility for himself, if even for himself and not for his caucus, he should stand today and on behalf of his leader apologize in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Constituency Allowances

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, the Board of Internal Economy directive no. 5 states that MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are entitled to funding to pay for office expenses and secretarial services incurred in respect of his or her duties as members in his or her constituency.

Mr. Minister, do you think that organizing political party events

during regular business hours falls under that definition? Should constituency offices and constituency secretaries be used to organize party events? What do you think, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It strikes me that that is a question more appropriately addressed to the Board of Internal Economy, the Speaker. It's hardly an appropriate question to the Minister of Justice. I know the members opposite are sorely in need of good advice, but the Minister of Justice doesn't act as a personal legal adviser to members opposite.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister may make light of the situation but clearly party events are not appropriate use of constituency offices or constituency secretaries. And you know that, Mr. Minister; you've been around here a long time.

Now I have a poster here, Mr. Minister, for an upcoming NDP fun spiel put on by the Regina north-east constituency. If you wish to enter the bonspiel, the person to call is Dianne at 757-9858. And I know you recognize the number, Mr. Minister. It's the number of your constituency office. And Dianne is your constituency secretary.

Now, Mr. Minister, do you think that taxpayers of this province should be paying your constituency secretary to organize a New Democratic Party fund-raiser out of your constituency office? Do you think that's proper, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I can provide members opposite with the names of the organizing committee if you want. None of them draw a pay cheque from the provincial government. That happens to be a number where there's someone at during the daytime. The people who are organizing it aren't at home. It just happens to be a number that's available.

Mr. Swenson: — Minister, that's simply not excusable, and you know it. Here's the poster. Dianne is your secretary. That's your constituency office, and it is clearly a political event, nothing else, Mr. Minister. I mean I don't know why you don't learn. Your member from Yorkton, your member from Melville, your member from Quill Lakes have all been caught using public funds to do NDP political work. It's not a simple error, Mr. Minister. You've been around a long time. I believe it was deliberate.

Now why was this bonspiel being organized out of your constituency office? Will you put a stop to it immediately? And what remedial action will you take, sir, to make sure that it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It really is, Mr. Speaker, a sign of how this session has degenerated into an issueless session, that something of this sort would consume a Friday morning session. Nothing about jobs, nothing about the budget, all of those issues have dissolved.

Instead they are reduced to the pettiest of muckraking, and this truly is the pettiest of muckraking. There is not a scintilla of

evidence this is being organized out of my office because it isn't being organized out of my office. She is taking telephone messages. No public funds are being spent organizing this. I suggest you people simply don't have a case here, and you don't have a question period, and you don't have any issues. And it strikes me you don't have a party, and you don't have much of an opposition either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Casino Management Company

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately the degeneration process in this province continues, as I direct my question to the minister responsible for gambling.

Madam Minister, your report from the committee which recommended that your government hire a Dutch company to run your casino is less than complete. Your report says you used the investigative service division of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority to undertake due diligence on each of the proponents.

Now, Madam Minister, these are the same people that cleared GTECH and VLC (Video Lottery Consultants), the companies which were under indictment in the U.S. (United States) for everything from government kickbacks to extortion. Perhaps not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, and Madam Minister, your report does not include any of the details of this investigation. So this doesn't give me and it doesn't give the public a great deal of confidence. Madam Minister, very simply, will you table the entire security report on these companies?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, here again the members of the Conservative opposition want to muckrake a company which has — a Crown corporation out of Holland — that has very, very high reputation, operate 14 casinos around the world, have never had this kind of an accusation made about them before. And I say to him that it was done through a process by the board of directors reviewing a number of casino operators. In the end, three submitted proposals: two from Las Vegas, one from Holland.

The board of directors of the casino corporation at the end, after all the due diligence and research was done, chose the Holland group because they best fit the needs of designing a community-based casino.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the jobs being created in the casino are important to the people of the province. And it's interesting today that on the day that StatsCanada releases the report on employment, which shows the job numbers for February up by 9,000, year over year, not a word of question from the Liberals or the Conservatives.

What they want to do is talk about curling bonspiels. They want

to talk about misinformation on health care, the member from Shaunavon, but not a word about jobs. And I say to the members opposite, look at the big issues in the province, and I want to tell you that this muckraking will take you nowhere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, you say that this Dutch company is the one that best supplies the needs for the people. We have no way of knowing that. We have no way of determining that because, Mr. Minister, the freedom of information Act was not designed to use it as a hiding place, but that's what you're doing throughout your entire report.

Just take a look at the last three pages of the report — zippo as far information is concerned. In fact the section deals with the cost to taxpayers and that has been completely removed.

You've completely censored the fees and the cost of this contract which is going to be paid to this Dutch company — completely. And I'm sure that this will be of great interest to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), the exhibition associations, and certainly to the taxpayers, because they are the ones that are going to be directly affected, Mr. Minister.

Will you table those costs today, Mr. Minister, or Madam Minister? Or do I have to look 46 sentences and 1,416 words further down in the report to be able to get that answer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite, who laughs from his seat to tell you how seriously he does take this issue, that yesterday he was attacking CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce). Yesterday he was attacking CIBC; today he's attacking another corporation which has a great reputation.

I say to the member opposite, if he has evidence that this is not a reputable company and able to do the job, tell us what it is. But obviously we will be working on this arrangement and the deal will not come as a surprise to the FSIN because they are the people who sat on the board of directors, reviewed the information when the deal was struck.

So for you to say, Mr. Member, that somehow the FSIN is going to be surprised by this deal, you should know that they were sitting on the board and made the decision. So don't tell me they're going to be surprised. They are the ones who in fact made the decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 42 — An Act to abolish the Rules Against Perpetuities and The Accumulations Act and to enact Consequential Amendments

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to abolish the Rules Against Perpetuities and The Accumulations Act and to enact Consequential Amendments.

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

Bill No. 43 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of amendments to An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act.

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

Bill No. 44 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I move first reading of The Local Government Election Amendment Act.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the motions for returns (not debatable), I would move they be converted to debatable motions.

The Speaker: — No. 48 and 49 motions for returns (not debatable) converted to motions for return debate. Order.

Mr. Toth: — Before government orders, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — I notice sitting in your gallery we have the newly-elected Liberal candidate who is the United Church pastor in our community, Mr. Vic Greenlaw, his wife Betty, and I'm not sure of that would be who . . . the mother or whoever is with them. But I think we'd like to join with them and ask the Assembly to join with you in welcoming these folks to the Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like

to join with the member from Moosomin in welcoming Vic and Bettyann Greenlaw from the Moosomin constituency. It's always nice when we see some of the replacements of some of the current members come to visit the legislature. And please welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 10 — An Act respecting Private Vocational Schools** be now read a second time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this morning to be able to add something perhaps to the debate on this Bill. It has come to our attention, of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, that there have been serious problems in this area over the past few years, and definitely it is right and proper that the government and the Minister of Education should take this approach to try to clear up the problems that we have in this area.

We do believe though that when we are trying to get these problems corrected, that we should do it right the first time and make sure that we've covered all of the bases and not have to end up redoing it right away again. So we want to discuss with the government members, Mr. Speaker, through you, the possibility of some amendments to this Bill in order to get the whole thing right so that we can protect the people that in fact it is intended to protect.

Now we noted, Mr. Speaker, that we have a government expenditure of some \$69,000 to study the vocational schools. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, after spending that much money, we would have thought that the legislation would have come in a little more complete and with a little more clarity. It seems an awful lot of money to put into the planning of a Bill that really doesn't quite hit the mark.

(1045)

Now changes did have to be made to this legislation. We know that these rules have to be tightened up for the private vocational schools although we have pointed out we don't think it has gone far enough. And I think that in all fairness, if we take a reasonable and rational approach to this Bill and point out to the government members where their shortcomings are, they might in fact go along with changing those things and make it all-encompassing in one try.

The good things about the Bill that we note — and we want to

give credit where credit is due — is that the minister is receiving now through this Bill an annual return and financial statements for the year. And that will be a very excellent start at financial accountability and put some responsibility into the process.

We note also that student contracts approved by the department will be a part of the new legislation, and that is an excellent approach, Mr. Speaker. Definitely there has to be somebody that takes a look at these kind of contracts that are done between educational professionals and students who haven't had any experience probably whatsoever in the areas of law and in the area of contracts. And so it's important that we have in the process the requirement to have these contracts checked over to make sure that the people involved are protected, especially in this case younger folks as a rule.

Now I realize that there are some older folks that also take advantage of these programs, but for the most part it's younger people who do need to have someone watch out for their interests a little more than the ordinary individual out in society. So we compliment the minister on including that part.

No operator of the school shall engage in the false advertising. Now I guess we've seen some examples of such advertising over the past year in the case of the Reliance students and others which were brought to the attention of the general public in the past year. So having had that experience, the government rightfully is acting on this area.

Now the Bill doesn't go far enough though, Mr. Speaker. It just hasn't quite caught all of the areas of concern that we think it should. So first and foremost, students who are caught in the middle of a school term need to be able to finish their courses with as little disturbance as possible. Now Bill No. 10 mentions this important consideration, yet there's not much in the legislation to address the real issue.

So we're asking very simply, Mr. Speaker, that the minister take a hard look at this area, review it, talk it over with some of the people who are involved in these kind of problems and see if they can't be a little more complete and a little more precise in making sure that this area of concern is addressed.

The training completion fund needs a little more examination. Now it seems that it's up to the school to develop a training completion plan to ensure a minimal disruption for the students now should their school close. Now does this mean reciprocal agreements will have to be signed between the private vocational schools?

And the legislation here, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is not clear. We don't know exactly whether we have to have the schools themselves now go to the other schools and make contracts among themselves so that in case something does happen that their students will then be taken care of. We want that clarified, because the approach of saying that we need to protect the students so that they will get their course completed in case the school goes broke half-way through that mandate

... now we want to ensure that they can finish their course but how will they in fact finish that course if there isn't an agreement or some other school available?

So what we want is quite simply to have the minister check this area out. Perhaps a little amendment here would clarify that; simply, if that's what she means, say so, say it clearly in the legislation: we expect you to negotiate with other schools and provide the Department of Education with a copy of your contract with others schools that are involved in this area that shows that they will take over your students and complete their courses if you yourself are unable to do that.

Now I hope that we have been clear in exactly what we mean here so that the minister can deal with this very important area. It's simply a matter of clarification, because quite factually, I think the minister is trying to do the right thing in this legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, we do want that part cleared up along with a few other things.

Further, in her second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, the minister stresses how much more protection students are going to receive under this legislation. Yet in the case of school closures, who gets paid first? This is a very important area, and I note that there are quite a few lawyers in the government side and they will know that when you go into bankruptcy, there can be some very serious problems of who gets the money that is available. And so when you set up a small bond that is available to draw from and a particular company or organization goes broke and declares bankruptcy, the secured creditors obviously get the money first. In our society that's what happens.

It's unfortunate though that when you have people working with other people's money and you have people who might go broke and there are people who need to get those monies back in order to continue with their lives, it's unfortunate but true, the banks are the people who are most usually the trained professionals in this area. So very naturally they're the ones who have protected themselves with all of the legal documentation and all of the dotting of the i's and crossing of t's to make legally their point that they would be the first in line, secured creditors.

And that always happens. And we can point to the private sector — and I guess I happen to have just a little bit of experience in this area that some other folks might not have, in that I worked with counselling in assistance for farmers for some years. And we did see some farmers going into bankruptcies and we did have some experience as to who stood in line to take the little bit of cash that might be left at the end of the day, after assets were liquidated.

The reality of course was that the big banks always seemed to be protected the best. And we've got to give them credit for doing their homework and doing their job right. But it does mean in this kind of a situation, if you take a comparison, that the people who can least afford to take the losses are the people who are the least secured in the process, and that of course in this situation would be the students. And the students of those

schools who might want to make a claim to get their money back — and we have some examples of that having happened in the past — they're the ones that end up holding the bag, so to speak. They don't get any money. They're the last in line. And they may even if they did qualify probably get 5 cents or 10 cents on the dollar. It's just simply not enough protection for young people who need training in our society.

The government members talked earlier today, Mr. Speaker, about the need to discuss jobs and job creation. Well that's what this kind of training is really all about. It's really all about training people to get jobs in our society, to be able to be self-sustaining in Saskatchewan, to be able to get off the welfare systems, the unemployment systems, and to actually get employment.

So if a school goes broke in the middle of a term, we want the government to write this legislation so that those people are definitely listed as secured creditors if there's a need to get that money out of that bond fund in order to apply it to a new school where they would, in fact, have to go to finish that course, if the school that they're presently in happens to shut down and not complete that course.

So we're saying we think that the government has the right idea here, we believe that their intent is right, but it hasn't been written into the legislation clearly enough to clearly identify that the students will be protected in this area.

I believe legislation can do this. I have no reason to suspect that bankers, for example, who might be the first secured creditors, could manipulate the legislation or the direction of the law in order to make themselves a preferential treatment if it is written into the legislation.

So that's what we're asking the minister to do, is to clarify her position, to restudy this for a few minutes, and see if we can't in fact come up with a plan that will protect the students, who are the most vulnerable in this process.

Now the small bond that we've talked about in this legislation cannot possibly come close to repaying the funds to all of the people involved. In reality, if you study this thing a little bit and take a close look at it, we've got a very small amount of money that's going to go into this fund.

I'm suggesting here, Minister, that maybe the idea would be to increase the size of your bond. Or maybe you want to put your government a little at risk here and stick your neck out for the students of this province, and say that you will back some of this bond with a government matching bond or something like that. We want you to revisit this issue and this question.

I'm not sure which is the fairest way to do it or the rightest way to do it. We don't certainly want to have to impose a bond on schools that would in effect break them from the outset so that they couldn't do business, so that they couldn't start up. So that would be self-defeating. But we do think that we have to have a little bigger fund available to protect the students themselves.

So let's revisit this issue. Let's discuss and think it over and see if we can't come up with some way that we can put more dollars available for the students in the event that there is a wreck in this process again in the future, as we have seen in the past.

It is unfortunate that the minister didn't seek the input of students like Ross Joorisity and Petria Racette. Now I guess these are the two students, Mr. Speaker, from the Reliance Business College, who have yet to have their situation resolved from the past experience that we have taken a look at.

So we want to know, I guess, from the minister, why she hasn't sat down with these kind of students, why hasn't she taken the time to discuss with them what their individual problem was, what it was like, and get their input into what needs to be done in order to protect the students themselves.

Now we understand that these students have offered many good ideas that would protect private vocational school students, and of course the institutions themselves need protection perhaps. And they've had some really good ideas, apparently.

And so we're suggesting to the minister that you should take a few minutes, maybe an hour or two, and sit down with these folks and draw from their past experience to see if we can't come up with a little better approach to solving the problems that exist here.

Now unfortunately many of the students' ideas were not included in this legislation, from what we can understand of the points that they've made with us and having read the legislation through.

So I hope that the minister is willing to sit down very soon to talk with these people. I'm suggesting that perhaps later this day or tomorrow you could get together with them, talk it over, then revisit the question, look at bringing in some amendments to your legislation in order to make sure that it covers all of the bases, make sure that it does the job right this time around so that we don't have to redo this again next year.

Always it seems that when we have legislation to protect people from a problem that has occurred, it gets . . . in our system, things happen that we get the legislation done up and then there's not another situation like that perhaps for a year or two or three down the road. And then all of a sudden, bang, we have another example of a wreck out there in the system and we find that the legislation should have been done better in order to cover that kind of a situation.

So what we're simply saying, as I hope a responsible opposition, is that we think you're doing the right thing here, we think you're going the right direction, but we want you to finish the job. And we don't want to have to go three or four years down the road, find another school going into a bankruptcy situation, and then find another group of students are into another big mess as a result of the fact that we didn't do our job right here, at this particular time.

So let's do our job right; let's take another look at this legislation, improve it a little bit, talk to the key players that have been involved, and get it right.

And so knowing that we need a little more time to study this, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask that the government members go along with us and we'll move adjournment on this debate while they carry on. I'm moving adjournment.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MLA Resigns

The Speaker: — Order, order. I wish to inform the Assembly that a few moments ago I received a letter which I believe I should read to the Assembly immediately:

Dear Mr. Speaker: I write to inform you of my decision to resign as the member of the Legislative Assembly for Quill Lakes, effective immediately. Yours sincerely,
Murray J. Koskie.

(1100)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Health

Vote 32

Item 1

The Chair: — Before we proceed, perhaps we might call on the minister to reintroduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The officials who are with us in the House today consist of Lorraine Hill, associate deputy minister, Department of Health; Andrea Smandych, acting manager of financial services; Maureen Yeske, executive director of health planning and policy development; Steve Petz, associate deputy minister; Glenda Yeates, associate deputy minister; and seated in the back of the Chamber, Jahzi Van Iderstine, who is an assistant to the deputy minister; and Lois Borden, who is executive director of district support.

Mr. Chair, in our last discussion of the estimate process I made a commitment to members opposite to provide for them a detailed accounting of the expenditures of the District Health Board Elections Commission. You will recall, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Chair, that initially it was suggested or has been suggested by members of the opposition and others that this was going to cost a half a million dollars, \$500,000. Those kind of figures have been bandied about in this House by members of the opposition, suggesting it would cost a half a million dollars or \$500,000.

Mr. Speaker, I will pass a printed copy to members opposite, of

this information, but here is the actual expenditure for the District Health Board Elections Commission. Remuneration to the commissioner, Mr. Garf Stevenson, was \$33,000; clerical services, \$6,240; office rental, \$4,770; office equipment and supplies, \$8,991; advertising and printing costs, and that consisted of advertising in every weekly and daily newspaper across Saskatchewan to announce the commission's work and then the printing of the final report, the advertising costs were \$11,340; travel paid to the commission was \$2,007; and miscellaneous meeting expenses, \$174. The total, Mr. Chair, for the expense of the District Health Board Elections Commission, the Stevenson commission, was \$66,522. And I believe we have copies of that. If I could get a page . . .

An Hon. Member: — They've gone over.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — They've gone over? Great. Than you very much.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you for taking the time to dig this information out and sending it over to us. We appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, I guess we could sit here and argue, well that isn't a significant amount of money in view of the expenditures in the Department of Health and certainly in the overall expenditures of government.

But I think at the end of the day, Mr. Minister, and that was the point I was trying to bring out . . . or bringing out the other day, the fact is that a decision had been made about the ward system regarding district health boards and about setting up that process.

And if I understand you correctly, the other day you indicated that the actual working . . . drawing up of wards within the district health boards is being undertaken by individuals who have been appointed to do this process from different groups. I believe seniors and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) has representation in most of the health districts in drawing up the ward maps.

I guess at the end . . . What I can say and what I would just like to bring to your attention, Mr. Minister, is, was this really necessary? I believe your government — and I realize you were not the minister of Health at that time — but the minister of Health when this decision was made had basically come to the conclusion that the ward process was the form of electionary process that you wanted established and have in place.

And I can only say, why did you not just proceed with that? Why didn't you just allow the process to take place as we see it evolving right now, rather than spending even \$66,000 on a commission that basically came back with an argument indicating these are the reasons that we must have the ward system? I wonder if you could just answer that, Mr. Minister.

Why did you spend this amount of money to come up with a

decision that you knew was already in place, rather than just going to the health districts and saying, we're establishing a ward system; would you just appoint . . . put a number of people in place to draw up wards or zones within your district to accommodate the election of the eight district health board members.

And certainly we would like all . . . As we've brought to your attention before, we would like to have all 12 elected. But even the fact that eight are being elected, I believe that process could have been accommodated quite simply, quite effectively, and certainly been in place for last fall and running the election of health board district members in conjunction with municipal government elections. And, Mr. Minister, why was that process not followed?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, let me try and address the member's concerns or questions about the functioning of the district electoral commission headed up by Mr. Stevenson.

As the member I'm sure will recognize, Mr. Garf Stevenson is a highly regarded individual in our province, having served in many capacities and continues to serve in many capacities across our province, highly regarded by a wide cross-section of Saskatchewan people. And indeed by having Mr. Garf Stevenson at work in this regard gave instant credibility to the work that was being done. The member is correct that decision had been taken that the districts should be divided into wards for the electoral purpose — a decision that I think was appropriately taken and I would want to defend on any platform in the province of Saskatchewan.

We took that decision, I think, as the member knows, to ensure that within any given district all communities could feel appropriately and adequately represented at the board level. However, that said, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the member would also recognize that what we are doing here is launching into an entirely new electoral process across the province of Saskatchewan. Indeed this is pioneering in Saskatchewan; it's pioneering in Canada.

As we've said many times, we are beginning a new electoral process. And whenever a new electoral process is being undertaken, there are a whole variety of issues that need to be explored and dealt with. The ward piece which had been decided is only one of many, many issues that need to be dealt with and decided.

Now we could have taken the option, I think, as the member would recommend — we could have taken the option simply within government as the Department of Health or as the government caucus, we could have taken decisions and then simply imposed those decisions on the people of Saskatchewan.

We could have made that arrangement in Regina and then we could have said to the rest of the province, this is the way it's going to be. We chose to use quite a different route — the route of consultation and conversation with communities, with groups that have particular interest, with representative bodies

across our province. And so to do that work independent of government, if I may say, independent of government, we established the commission that was headed by Mr. Stevenson.

Mr. Stevenson then went, as was our desire, and consulted and talked with people across our province. He talked with all of the major groups, the representative groups in our province — SUMA, SARM, SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations). He met and spoke with the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

Beyond that he held public meetings in many communities, invited general interest in the electoral process, invited people with special interest. And then through that process, that rather lengthy process of community consultation, then presented to government a significant set of recommendations.

I have here, Mr. Chair, a copy of the Stevenson report, or the report of the Saskatchewan Commission on District Health Board Elections. I know the member has a copy and he will know from having read the copy — I'm sure he did — that the recommendations and the work that Mr. Stevenson did goes far, far, far beyond the simple question of whether we'll have wards or not. He's right; we'd made that decision.

But he, for instance, Mr. Chair, has provided for government and for the public, recommendations on the timing of the election, various options for conducting the voting. He made recommendation about the need to appoint a provincial administrator for the health board elections, which has been done.

He talked in his report about the time lines leading up to the election, and all of the various things that needed to be accomplished before the first elections could happen. He talks then about the timing of those who will be appointed to the boards following the elections.

He makes recommendations, Mr. Chair, regarding the qualifications of a board member. These are important discussions and important recommendations. He talks in his report about the responsibilities of a board member. He talks about how the process of nomination for district health board candidates should occur.

He discusses, which is a significant issue, limitations around election spending in the health board election process. He talks about, and again an important subject, the conflict of interest guidelines that should be in place for health board and health board members. He addresses the questions of a code of ethics for district health board members.

Then he talks very specifically about ward boundaries and suggests process for the establishment of the ward boundaries. And if the member, Mr. Chair, if the member's been reading any of the local papers in our province these days, he will see in many of them the district boards are now doing their public discussions about the ward boundaries.

I happened to be in Weyburn yesterday, and the journalist there tells me that their papers now will be publishing some tentative district health board ward boundaries for their communities to look at.

He talked about, in his report, equitable representation. He talked about voter qualifications. He talked about the question of by-elections.

So, Mr. Chair, my point is this. The member suggests that we should not have needed to do this work because we had already made the decision about wards. It's true. We'd made the decision about wards. But all of these other very significant and very important issues in this pioneering process, we felt it was important that the people of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to have their input, voice their concerns. We had a gentleman with a high degree of credibility across our province doing it.

Members of your caucus, the Liberal caucus, were throwing around figures saying that this was going to cost a half a million dollars, \$500,000. Perhaps not so much in your case, but certainly in the case of our Liberal friends here. Some of these figures that they throw around in the House are so wildly exaggerated.

Well the fact of the matter is this commission did a great, great work for the people of Saskatchewan, and they did it far, far under budget for a total of \$66,000.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would have been disappointed if there wouldn't have been a number of recommendations coming forward regarding the process. I think it would have basically said to us, that would have indeed proven that it really wasn't necessary to have the commission.

And the fact that there are a number of recommendations . . . I think a lot of those recommendations that were brought forward by Mr. Stevenson certainly aren't new, because a lot of people had those in the back of their minds over the period of time.

Now I'm not exactly sure how much access people had to . . . or how many submissions came forward to the commission, but maybe . . . The one thing you did mention, Mr. Minister, was about the timing, and I'm not exactly sure if your department has established a time or a period when these elections would take place. I believe you had indicated that the elections will take place and then the appointment for appointed positions will be done after the elections take place.

(1115)

And I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you could just indicate if there's a specific time that's being brought forward as to the appropriate time to run these elections. Or whether or not in following years they will basically be tied to the municipal elections and combining the process, versus sending . . . asking people to elect health district board members on one week and then two weeks later going to the polls for municipal elections. I'm wondering if you could just clarify that.

And then also I believe the other day you indicated that the chairman would be elected by the district health board itself. Now this probably, if I understand from what your comments today, would not be able to take place until the appointed positions have already been put in place. Is that true? Maybe you could just clarify some . . . that comment or that point as well, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'd be very happy to clarify on that point. No, the appointees to the district board, those who will be appointed, will be appointed following the election, following the electoral process. That's the way it'll work.

And the point there is that our view in having and maintaining four appointed positions is that those appointees should complement those who are elected. Now when I say complement, I mean that those who are appointed should hopefully reflect even a broader scope of the community and the district than might be put on the board through the electoral process.

In your comments you asked the question about the number of submissions that the commission actually heard. I don't have them totalled, but if you refer to the document, they are all listed there. And the list is a very significant list including, if I may say, some correspondence from your own caucus and your own leader; including a meeting with the Leader of the Third Party here in the House. But perhaps even more significant, a long, long list of community organizations, district health boards, health organizations, and a long list of individuals who communicated with the district health board commission.

You ask about the timing of the health board elections. I have said repeatedly, and say again today, those elections will be held during this calendar year. No specific date has been set. We are looking to a fall date. And some of this is being predicated on the necessary preparation, which is happening now. We want all of the preparations to be well in place.

We also desire a time of public education so that people can know exactly how this whole process is going to work. Because I think the last thing that anybody would want is a circumstance that we've come through the district health board elections and they are questioned because of questions about the process.

And so we do want to have all the process well in hand and well in place, and then give some time for public education so people can understand the process. And that will very, very likely take us into the fall.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, when you talk about fall, and I'd just like a clarification on this fact, is the department looking seriously at, when you talk about a fall date, at tying these elections into the same time period as the municipal elections, so that we don't really have an overlap or we don't have . . . I think at the end of the day what you'll find, Mr. Minister, while the people want the opportunity to vote and are willing to get out and vote, they also don't really want to be asked to go to the polls in one week, and then two weeks later go to the polls on

another issue, and then down the road a third issue.

It seems to me there that we could coordinate the municipal elections and health district board elections and any other elections that may take place around the same day, formulating a question and a ballot on that basis; that the public in general would certainly find it more appropriate. Serves their needs and it gives them their opportunity to vote, but also would be viewing this as a process whereby it's not another additional cost.

Yes, there will be some costs associated with electing district health boards. And I don't want you to get . . . want you to think or the public to think that there's no extra costs. There will be some costs associated. But there would be also savings in combining, rather than running two or three separate elections.

So I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could just inform us of the process that has taken place, the discussion that's taken place, and where you are leaning, so that at the end of the day we have a simplified and effective way of electing not only local governments but district health boards.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I appreciate the member's comments here and I think he reflects a concern that we all have.

Let me just share with the members some of the difficulties that present immediately if we talk about having both electoral processes happening simultaneously, or on the same day. As the member will know, in this first election we intend to have the elections in every health district. My understanding of the municipal elections this year is that this is the staggered process that the municipal elections go through. However in this instance, we want all of our health boards to be going to election this year. Point number one.

Point number two, as the member will know, our health district boundaries do not, and by legislation are not forced to, follow municipal boundaries. And so we have a circumstance where the boundaries of the jurisdictions — municipal as opposed to health districts — are in some cases quite different.

Add to that our commitment to have the health board elections conducted on a ward basis. And so again, the wards are not in any way coterminous with — or necessarily coterminous — with municipal boundaries, which presents I think a significant issue in the discussion.

Further to that, when we consider the process of municipal elections more generally and when we're talking about urban municipal or rural municipal, I know the experience we've had in our own community in the last number of years is that in that municipal process, we may be faced with several, if not numerous, issues to deal with.

There will be the typical council elections; there may be election for mayor or reeve. And in these circumstances, I know in my own experience in our own community, on occasion the ballots for these have become a long and lengthy list.

You can add to that then the concept of school board elections, which do occur at the same time, with the various issues that maybe surround the school board elections and the various list of candidates in that regard. And then you may have a number of local plebiscite issues that are there. I think we would have to think very seriously about then adding the very, very important — very, very important work of selecting our health board membership at that same time and in what could be a very complicated kind of a milieu.

It is at best very debatable about the question of cost, and would there be any savings by combining with the municipal election.

I note these figures on the financial statements. These statements come from the Department of Education. They would indicate that the school boards will have spent in 1991 in the electoral process, 533,685. Now that may sound a reasonable figure, and I think that figure has sometimes been suggested as what it would cost. But in fact what school boards do, they average their cost over the three-year cycle. And so they average it at 500,000 or 530 in this case, per year for three years. And so the actual figure is well more than a million and a half that it costs the school boards, and they run simultaneously with the municipal elections. So that's a pretty significant cost.

If we take just the city of Saskatoon and the cost of combining the school board election with the municipal election, we find that it costs 350,000 for the total election, half of which came from the school board. So in one community alone it was \$170,000.

Here in the city of Regina, their total election expense is \$482,000, half of that, \$233,000 attributed to the school board. And so the school board elections combined with the municipal elections in Regina and Saskatoon alone came to over \$400,000.

And provincially, the audited statements from the Department of Education tell us that it would cost about 1.5 or more. And so it is at best debatable whether there is any real cost saving to running municipal and health board elections simultaneously.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess as I've indicated on a number of occasions, I think the process of consultation on an area-wide basis is certainly important. And whether or not I totally agree with how you've drawn up or your government has drawn up or worked towards district health boards, I still can see a problem that we'll be facing down the road.

And I think that it will certainly be hitting us . . . whether it's before the year 2000, I don't know. But one of the problems I saw a number of years ago was the fact that: we had municipal government; we had rural government; we had a hospital district, and we had a school district, and we've got a home care district. We've got so many divisions or boundaries drawn up, that when you start looking at a map, you can't find the towns because there's so many lines crossing over.

And unfortunately, I think the same thing is taking place here. I'm not sure that we've really defined what would be good, solid trading areas, and I think when I raise that I think at the end of the day we're possibly going to have to come to a point in asking local governments as well to become involved and school boards in addressing trading areas where education and rural government and health are basically built into an area and are working together and working coterminously I guess as well.

So that is . . . while the larger health districts do offer some benefits, I'm not exactly sure we still have achieved what could be in the long run, what will be needed in the long run, to provide more efficient, effective, and appropriate care as well as . . . whether it's in health, whether it's education, or just in local government.

Mr. Minister, there are a couple of questions that were raised in the past and I'd like to bring to your attention again this morning to get your input on, because there . . . who are people who have asked questions about these questions to our attention. And the one is regarding private care homes. And I'm going to get back to that in view of the fact that the Minister of Economic Development stood up in this House during question period and asked where our questions were regarding job creation in this province.

And I've raised the question with you, I've brought this to your attention; the fact that if we would get on and come up with a policy regarding licensing of private care homes, that certainly opens up the door for job creation in rural Saskatchewan.

And it's not only the job creation aspect, Mr. Minister. As well, it would be meeting a need in rural Saskatchewan, and not just rural Saskatchewan; I would think even in . . . I think we had this in our discussion of the other day, you had mentioned that some of our larger communities have had presentations regarding private care homes.

Unfortunately, the legislation today just licenses a facility based on 10 individuals, and what we're talking of here is people who would like to build private care homes that would maybe have up to 30 members in those private care homes.

And I'm wondering today, Mr. Minister, if you've had any further discussion or we've moved along further, if you've come to a point within the department that you're getting closer to a decision on this, to address the needs that are already being presented by organizations and communities like Avonlea. And, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could respond and let us know where we sit today.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thanks Mr. Chair. I'll try and go from where the member ended and then reverse in the areas that he raised in his comments. He gives me quite a wide swath every time he asks a question.

Let me refer to the discussions that we've had here earlier about the policy regarding personal care homes and private

investment in providing supportive and long-term care in our province; and I have assured the member on a number of occasions that the decision would be made public very soon. I will explain now to the member the process and where I see this process happening, again I repeat, very soon.

Mr. Chair, in the context of our government — I'm not sure how it worked when the members opposite were in government — but this is a very significant and important issue. Therefore, while I suppose it is entirely in the purview of the Minister of Health to announce policy decision, I want to share this policy decision with my cabinet colleagues and with my caucus colleagues. I had hoped to see that happen this week. Our regular opportunity to meet in a lengthy cabinet meeting is Tuesday morning and many of our members of cabinet were attending to Bishop Mahoney's funeral this past Tuesday, as you know, and because of that constraint I anticipate having this then before my colleagues very soon. And beyond that, there will be public announcement. And if I dare to predict, I'm confident that all members of the House will feel good about the policy that will be announced.

So if I can ask the member's indulgence, the policy will be announced very soon, very soon.

I want to just say just a word though about the member's observation about the provision of jobs. And I understand the point; it is a significant point and without doubt health care provision in our province is a large employer, if not one of the largest in the province, if not the largest in the province.

(1130)

But I think we always have to be a little cautious and a little careful about justifying how we provide health care on the basis of whether or not it provides jobs. I think our goal in health must be to provide high, high quality care and not to consider health to be economic development. I just want to make that point.

Now earlier in your comments, the member talks about the formation of the districts and the various boundaries which do exist in our province, and here he strikes I think what is a very important point and indeed what gave motivation, in some ways, to the formation of health districts.

Now he will know — he was in government at the time — that his government spent several millions of dollars on the Murray Commission, which commission travelled the province, did a very, very thorough review of health care delivery across our province at some great expense.

His government chose not to act on the recommendations of the Murray, but one of the key recommendations of the Murray report, as he well knows, was a recommendation to move to more regional delivery of health care services.

Now the Murray Commission recommended I think about 15 regions across the province. As we assessed the Murray

Commission and did our own conversations with the people of our province, it seemed to us that 15 regions created regions which were simply too large and we've opted to a smaller district size and so we have about 30 across the province.

The Murray Commission, from their conversations with Saskatchewan people, in our conversations with Saskatchewan people, make the very point that you make, that when we had the small hospital board here and the small ambulance board here and the small home district here, that the lines were very convoluted. And what was being prevented, it's what we all desire, and that is the integration of services and the most effective and efficient delivery of services to the people of our province that we can manage.

Everyone had concluded for many years that the right way to move in this regard was to do this in a more regional district concept. Now we had the courage to do it, and it wasn't easy.

Now some other governments in Canada are doing exactly the same thing, but using quite a different style. For instance, if you take the Liberal government from the Maritimes, what they did was simply, in their capital city, decide how many districts there were going to be and then just drew the map, dissolved all of the health boards in the province, the hospitals, the home cares, the ambulance boards, and just inflicted these district boundaries on their province.

We chose to use, as we are using now in the ward divisions . . . but when we designed the district boards, we chose to use the process of letting communities decide.

Now I recall some journalist and others coming from central Canada to our province and reviewing this process as it was going on and with communities trying to decide for themselves which district formation they would like to be a part of. I remember some of those journalists and some of these . . . the brain trust from central Canada coming to our province and saying, it will never work; you'll never do it; at the end of the day the province of Saskatchewan, the government, or the Department of Health, or somebody is going to have to just put their foot down and say these are where the district boundaries are.

Well I maintain those folks who were here observing that and saying those kinds of things were wrong because they didn't understand our province. Because we've got a long history in Saskatchewan, a long history of communities being able to work together. Now it wasn't simple. It wasn't simple, and there were some struggles — there's no doubt about that — in the initial formation of the district boundaries.

But it is my conviction today, as it was then, that having allowed this process to work on a community basis was the better route, better than some of us sitting in the Department of Health in Regina on Albert Street, deciding where those district boundaries could be. Because they will, having been formed at the community level, will much more reflect trading patterns and all of those things which cannot be shown always in

statistical population information and the kind of things that we have to look at.

I've used this analogy, Mr. Chair, about the district boards and how they were formed, how these boundaries were formed. When I was a student over here at the University of Regina, the campus wasn't all that old in those days — I hate to admit it, but it wasn't all that old — and there were a limited number of buildings on the campus. And I think they'd hired some kind of a special . . . I don't know what you would call them — they do sidewalks; they plan landscaping and so on. And they'd landscaped the place and they'd put these sidewalks all over the place. And then we students arrived on the place, and of course we came out of one door of the building and went directly across to the next door, right across the lawn, not where the sidewalk was. Well now when I go over to the University of Regina, I see they've moved the sidewalks to where the students walk.

I think in terms of the district board formation, that's precisely what happened. We formed our district boards where people tend to walk and where they live, and they had a better sense. And that's exactly what's happening now in these weeks and months as we form the wards.

Again, we're going to communities. We're not imposing, nor are the district boards imposing the ward boundaries. They're going to their communities. They're saying, where do you believe the appropriate division should be within our district. Where should the lines be drawn? And now I see as I review the newspapers in the province these days, I see public ads being taken out with proposed ward boundaries inviting public comment.

This is the way we've done it in Saskatchewan, and I think in the long run this will give us much more lasting health districts.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for reviewing that process again. I'm not exactly sure that it totally addressed all the issues and the questions and the long-term aspects of health care, but you and I can have our differences of opinion, and that's fine.

I guess, as I indicated the last time, we discussed the issue of when we will finally hear about private care homes. The concern I have is the fact that soon is the word that's used, and soon can mean quite a difference of opinion. It could mean two days. It could mean two weeks. It could mean two months. It could mean never. So that's the concern I have there, and I trust that indeed that there is a time period that you're looking for some information regarding private care homes.

Another issue I'd like to address, rather than spending all our time in certain areas . . . there's certainly so many areas that we need to look at in regards to health. I also raised the question regarding eye services and eye surgery in Saskatoon a while back, for Mr. Korizone had brought to our attention.

And at that time it was indicated to us that we do have indeed specialists who operate and — I believe it's out of City Hospital

— who provide eye surgery and that we have a waiting-list of some 18 months. And Mr. Korizone, because of the problems that were developing that were actually progressing much more rapidly than had been anticipated, the specialists had moved him up on the waiting-list, and then he was informed that actually the service had been shut down because of lack of funding.

And I'm wondering if you could update us on that process and whether or not there were emergency funds that could have been drawn on to maintain or continue the eye operational services that are available through City -- and you can correct me on this, Mr. Minister, but I believe it's through City Hospital — to continue that service and make it available rather than shutting that service down for a month. And what that does is just lengthens the waiting time for people who are looking for and need the laser services to enhance their vision and certainly enhance their quality of life. So, Mr. Minister, could you bring us up to date on that question.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we're trying to assemble the most up-to-date and accurate information so that I can speak to the member's question. We may work a little more at that yet, but let me begin by sharing some information with him.

When we talk about cataract surgeries generally province-wide, the member should know that in 1988-89 the volume of cataract surgeries conducted in that year were 3,082 — 3,082 in 1988-89. In the last full year, 1993-94, we conducted 6,774. And so there has been literally a 120 per cent increase in the number of cataract surgeries being performed in our province over the past five years.

And if you take that number, the number of 6,774 cataract surgeries, and apply to it to our population in Saskatchewan, you would see that Saskatchewan ranks very near the top of cataract surgeries being offered to its population anywhere in Canada.

Now we have the issue of the waiting-list for cataract surgery. Let me put that in some context, Mr. Chair. In 1994, the Fraser Institute of British Columbia did a survey across Canada of waiting-lists and waiting times, and they looked at all the various surgical procedures and specialty treatments.

In this context, if we take all of the waiting-lists, all of the surgical procedures, Mr. Chair, the Fraser Institute's work shows that in Saskatchewan we enjoy the second — I repeat — the second best record in all of Canada. The only province in Canada where the waiting times from when you first see the doctor to when you receive the specialty treatment, the only province better than Saskatchewan is the province of Quebec. And Quebec only marginally better than Saskatchewan.

Now that said, and I think we can all feel . . . we can feel good about that in our province, that the service is . . . while we might all desire that all of the procedures might be more readily available, I think we can feel good that in Saskatchewan we've come a long ways in making our specialty services and

surgeries more available to our people than in anywhere other than Quebec.

However, Mr. Chair, with that said, it is recognized that there are still waiting-lists around, particularly cataract surgeries. In fact in the Fraser study work, as I've reviewed it, it is the one area that is highlighted in our province as being of some significance.

Now I want to share with the member some . . . just statistical information to illustrate that when it comes to cataract surgeries, the waiting times will vary considerably dependent on your ophthalmologist and will depend upon where you seek to have the surgery done, be it either in Saskatoon or Regina.

Generally said, the waiting period in the city of Regina is a shorter waiting period. The waiting period in the city of Saskatoon is high in the case of two individual ophthalmologists. But other ophthalmologists practising in the city of Saskatoon have elective lists and waiting-lists that are much, much shorter.

And so the issue here is really the allocation between all of the ophthalmologists in our province. And we want to be fair to all the ophthalmologists so they can have a sense of fairness in terms of their access to the surgical procedures, but the issue tends to be an issue particularly focused in Saskatoon and particularly focused on two ophthalmologists

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while you produce statistics that show the increase in the amount of surgeries that have taken place from '88-89 to I believe it was '93-94 statistics you gave me, I think the statistics can show a couple of things. While it shows that we certainly have the ability to do more procedures, it also shows that we do have an ageing population and a population that tends to run into more problems with the need to have cataract surgery. And I think, at the end of the day, it's appropriate that we are indeed trying to provide the service.

Now you mention that the service is available in Regina as well as in Saskatoon. You also indicated that there is a difference between ophthalmologists as to the waiting-list. The other question I had raised was the fact that the individual who had raised the concern with us was informed that indeed the procedure was not available through the month of March until the new budget year. And I don't believe you addressed that.

Maybe, Mr. Minister, you could inform us as to whether or not the laser surgery continues to be offered, is available. And I'd like to know — I'm not just addressing it to Saskatoon as to where the question comes from — I'd like to know in conjunction with which hospital it's serviced from in the province, and whether or not that procedure continues to be offered and surgery continues to be performed on a daily basis in this province regarding cataract surgery.

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the member now asks I think very specifically about the laser procedure. Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. I know that we're going to be back into estimates again — I assume we will be — before this session ends. And next time round we'll bring the very, very . . . we'll review the *Hansard* and check the member's question very carefully and get very specific information.

Because . . . well let me say this. As we know, when we're talking about waiting- lists, these lists can sometimes be deceptive. For instance, on the waiting-list there may be a certain number of people, some of whom will opt voluntarily, for personal reasons or other commitments, to postpone that cataract surgery or change their time.

And to illustrate, during the month of July 1994, there were in Saskatoon, 66 cases on a waiting-list for cataract surgery. Of those 66, 34 of them voluntarily chose to reschedule.

So I think we just need to understand that waiting-lists are not . . . like there are issues around them.

Let me just say again to the member that if we take the 10-year period . . . I've got some 10-year period numbers here, from 1983 to 1993, in the city of Saskatoon. The number of procedures, cataract procedures, went from 881 in 1983 to 3,786 in 1993. And that's a 330 per cent increase in the number of surgeries. And so we are providing the cataract procedure in large numbers, 120 per cent more now than we did just five years ago. And in Saskatoon alone, 330 per cent more than we did 10 years ago.

Is there yet room to move? Yes, we believe there is. And we've worked with . . . as the Department of Health we've been working with particularly the Regina and Saskatoon boards in trying to streamline the waiting procedure in processes that can make fair allocation to all ophthalmologists, with the resources we have available, to try and meet the need as best as we can.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, you raise an interesting point or a question, I guess. And you kept coming back to the question I raised a minute ago. I didn't still receive an answer as to . . . You indicated earlier on that both Saskatoon and Regina have eye surgery service available. I get, from the last response you made, that there's two forms of eye surgery: laser surgery and possibly another form. And I'd like a bit of a clarification on that.

I'd like to know how many ophthalmologists are operating in the province, how many would operate in the city of Regina, what facilities they would operate out of, as well as in the city of Saskatoon.

And I guess the other concern I would have, or question I would have, is when we're talking, if there's a difference between laser surgery and other surgery, I would almost think that laser surgery must be the highest form of surgery or institute most of the surgeries. And if not, I'd like a clarification on that. And maybe if you'd indicate to us what the difference is

between the laser surgery and other methods of surgery.

We're getting into a fairly large area and there's no doubt about that. I can appreciate that. But maybe for my own information, and certainly as constituents call us, then we can inform them of other procedures and other avenues that they may follow through in progressing with or speeding up or receiving the treatment that they are looking for.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I am technically unable, I think, to address fully the member's question. I do not even pretend to have the kind of expertise, I think, that could describe in any detail the various procedures that will be used by ophthalmologists in cataract procedures.

Now we can try and get some information for the member in that regard. I can very specifically report that today in Saskatchewan there are 17 ophthalmologists practising in our province.

General Revenue Fund Municipal Government Vote 24

The Chair: — The Municipal Government has been before the committee previously, but I'll ask the minister to reintroduce her officials to the members of the committee.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right I have Ken Alecx, associate deputy minister of Municipal Government; behind me I have Larry Chaykowski, director of finance and administration; to my left I have Craig Marchinko, director of operations and programs in Sask Housing; and at the back we have John Edwards, Paul Rath, Ron Holgerson, and Ken Engel from the department.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, a question that just arose this morning, and it may or may not apply to your department, but I'd like to bring it to your attention. Maybe it's something that can be addressed and can be looked into. And that's just one of a number of questions that certainly I'd like to raise with you this morning.

But this one comes from a constituent and it's regarding a spring in the Qu'Appelle Valley, and there's a discrepancy as to who's responsible to maintain access to that spring. And I know some of your officials will know of where I'm talking of. It's just north of Whitewood as you go down into the Qu'Appelle Valley on the south side. And access to that spring . . . a lot of people actually draw water, draw their drinking water from that spring. And the question that just came this morning: who's responsible to maintain access down to the spring? It's something that I've discussed with Highways, and I will certainly probably bring it to the attention of the Minister of Highways as well.

But the constituent who raised the question was told, well it's

Highways; Highways said no, it's not us, it's Parks; Parks said no, it's not us, it's Municipal Government. And I'm wondering if your department has any information . . . has been receiving any inquiries about access.

And what I'm talking about is the fact that this spring is available, and as I say, a lot of people in the surrounding area . . . in fact you'd be surprised as to where people drive from to get water from this spring. And in the wintertime the problem they have with this highway; it's just running by right now, and they build a bank up on the access and you can't get down to the spring to draw your water. And even then, if you do, we have icy conditions and they're unable to get up top.

I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if you can inform us as to maybe the appropriate source we should be going to to provide access. I don't believe it's a major, or a costly thing just to . . . even maybe to talk to your colleague and have the Department of Highways just whip in there with the truck, clean it out, drop some gravel, and certainly drop some gravel in the spring.

I wonder if you could just bring us up to date as to where we should be maybe going regarding this concern.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you for that question. We haven't heard of the problem before. Usually access is a responsibility of municipal government, usually the RMs who perform all the road work, the infrastructure out in rural municipalities. What I would like you to do if you would, would provide us with more detail about this and I'll ask our officials to find where this is in the . . . in which municipality it is and we'll get back to you with an answer.

But from hearing what I heard through your question, I would say that the road network is a responsibility, as you know, of the rural municipality. If the spring is off a grid road, and then the question is who should provide access to that spring if it's off the grid road, I don't know that we can give you an answer right now but we'll look into it and I'll provide you with an answer in due course.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just for your information, it's in the RM of Willowdale. And actually the access is right off Highway No. 9. It's down towards the bottom of the valley on the south side of the river. And I know there are some officials have knowledge of the area I'm talking about.

But as I indicated, the concern that was raised with me this morning by the individual . . . and this is not just one, we've had a number of issues raised last year with regards to gravelling and what have you and maintenance of the site. And I guess what has cropped up this winter is the fact that as Highways goes cruising by to clear off Highway No. 9, a few years back they used to just whip down, make a quick run into the spring and around and back up and people could get down, could get access to it, but now it isn't there.

And maybe your department could as well look into it and come up with a suggestion, maybe even I guess help me if you will to maybe bring it up and suggest to even the Department of Highways that for the time it takes, it's something that I think we could quickly address.

I think that on the other side it comes to the municipal government level where RMs have said, well because that happens to be in the RM of Willowdale, maybe you should send your patrol down and yet for them it would be . . . you'd be probably looking at 15, 20 minutes, even half an hour to an hour, just for the patrol to run down, down the highway just to this access. And I'm not exactly sure whether that's really their responsibility or Highways or Municipal Government.

So like I say, it's kind of a broad and open question and maybe we could by working together resolve the concern that continually arises out of the access to that spring.

Another question, Madam Minister, comes from the . . . I received a letter from the RM of Martin, the rural municipality of Martin, and this is another issue that's not just confined to the RM of Martin or to other RMs in my constituency. But it's regarding to the new . . . it's in regard to the new provincial contracting policy and how RMs will be affected by this new contracting policy, where unions are basically given union preference; and whether RMs will be affected, whether the fact that they must conform to the new directives that are coming out and what costs will be associated with it.

Because I'm sure you're well aware, Madam Minister, that your department has actually been putting a lot more pressure on local governments. And while we stand . . . and your colleagues would argue in this House that we've balanced the budget and we've done it by not placing taxes on taxpayers, by not increasing taxes, the local tax base is finding that the mill rate has always had to be adjusted as the offload has fallen on their shoulders.

And the concern out there within RMs is what problems are going to be associated with regards to the new labour legislation and the contracting policy, the costs that are going to be incurred by local governments such as the RM of Martin, as this new policy comes into effect.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Well thank you for that question, and actually I'm glad you brought it up. Because RMs, municipal governments, will not be affected at all by the contracting policy that was announced. That policy is only for Crown corporations and only for major construction projects that are undertaken by Crown corporations. So it does not in any way affect the operations at the municipal level.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Madam Minister, I think the concerns that RMs like the RM of Martin have, come back to . . . And you can appreciate the RM of Martin and their concern. They happen to . . . As well, the community of Wapella is in that RM.

(1200)

And we just raised it . . . had a question last year that came up regarding a contract of developing their water supply and water reservoir and the distribution of water, and the fact that Wapella ended up with a \$30,000 bill on their hands because a contractor came to them and took them to court or sued them over the fact that they felt that they should have received the bid, received the tender, versus the contractor that the council went with, due to the fact that the contractor they chose happened to be in closer proximity. And they felt if they had problems, it would in the long run be cheaper for them to have the local person versus the other contractor. And I guess at the end of the day they ended up with a \$30,000 bill, which for the community of Wapella is a substantial cost.

And those are some of the concerns that come up over the contracting issue, is the fact that you just indicated that it really doesn't affect them. But what if they let a contract? What if a union contractor then comes back at them and says, this Act applies to you as well and we feel that you have not been fair to us? Madam Minister, maybe you could respond on that.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Well I thank you for the question, but you're really drawing a long bow here. The agreement that we have is directly targeted to Crown corporations that are undertaking major construction projects. And the example that you brought forward we talked about last year in estimates. And it had to do with the tendering advertisement that that town let out and they were not specific in how they described their right to make choices other than the lowest tender. So I think that has gone to court.

Last year we talked about it. I don't have the background right now with me, but I know last year in estimates you brought it up, we responded, we sent out to the municipal governments a directive saying that they must be careful when they're tendering to make sure that they say in the tender document whether there is going to be any limitations on the lowest bidder. And we have done that. I don't think there are any problems right now, that have come to our attention anyway.

And if . . . we maybe should then send out a letter to all rural municipalities and perhaps to municipalities in general, saying the new agreement applies to Crown corporations and to their major construction projects and it doesn't apply in any way to the operations at the municipal level.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think maybe that would be appropriate to indeed send the clarification out so that RMs themselves . . . and I think at the end of the day what that says as well, if they are confronted by any contractor who would try to use that against them, they could bring to the attention of the contractor that this is a specific agreement and that indeed as RM councils we do not fall under that specific agreement. And I think that would be an appropriate manner of addressing it, Madam Minister, and so I think . . . and I would encourage you to indeed take the time to pass on that information, if you would.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I look through

your responsibilities, Madam Minister, there are a number of things that come to mind. First of all there is a concern that I would, being a former reeve of a municipality and you being a mayor . . . regarding by-laws that municipalities — urban and rural — put into place, and a ruling recently regarding the role of the Human Rights Code in relation to standards set out by municipalities. Would you be able to give us your perspective of the role that municipalities should be playing in view of this?

There are probably thousands of facilities in the province of Saskatchewan that get rearranged every year based on a building standard set out by the municipalities, and the Human Rights Code having that probably ultimate authority, as they have assumed that their rules and laws supersede any of the others. And I was wondering whether you'd have a comment on that for us today.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes, thank you. Obviously you're referring to the legislation on the universal accessibility building standards code and where it might or might not come in conflict with the Human Rights Code on accessibility.

There was a case that was before the courts. That case has been decided. It is very clear that the Human Rights Code takes precedence over all our other Acts. What has come about as a consequence of the court decision and that event down at a business down in Regina, we have sent to all municipalities who are responsible for giving building licences a directive saying that they must inform people who are taking out building licences in order to renovate property . . . the knowledge or the information that they must also comply with the Human Rights Code.

And there are certain exceptions or exemptions that can be applied, but it is important that not only do they comply with the UBAS (The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act) but they also must comply with the Human Rights Code. And in most instances, in fact 99 per cent of the times, those two are very compatible; there is no conflict.

Recently there was conflict, as we know, and the courts heard that, and I think it's still before the courts. But however as a consequence to that, once again I will say to you that our department has written to urban municipalities who are responsible for this area, telling them to be careful that when they give out licences they must tell the people who are doing the renovations that they also must comply with the Human Rights Code.

Mr. Martens: — There is a possibility of two separate things that may occur — the liability of the individual who is doing the renovating, and the agency that gives him the licence has a possible liability as well.

I recall a number of instances in history where law has been . . . or courts have determined that when a rule is made in relation to a project — and this case that I'm thinking about was in Kamloops where the city was involved in some kind of a by-law, they initiated something and then they did not go out and

remove that from the property or force or tell the individual to move it off the property and get rid of it — and in that case the liability was held with the city. I think it was Kamloops or Kelowna.

But in any case there is, I believe, some risk here in relation to the urban municipalities who do not know all about the responsibilities they have. And is that also a part of that information?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — No. At the time we sent out the information, it really was directed at the UBAS and the Human Rights Code, and trying to tell any licencer in the city office that they must direct their officials to tell somebody taking out a licence to renovate that they must be aware of the Human Rights Code.

What you have brought up, I think there are many occasions where there are municipalities have been challenged as far as whether they have provided adequate notice on a street or road that there is a hazard and there have been occasions where they have gone to court. And really, I think there is adequate provision within The Urban Municipality Act for them to understand their role and responsibility and their liabilities.

What they must do is when they're taking out insurance they must make sure that they are covered for that. So once again, the obligation is not within the Act, but it's within the municipality and the administration of the municipality to make sure that they have covered themselves against those eventualities where there may be negligence on the part of their workers or something happens and someone in the public is harmed and there is a court case, and they must make sure that they have liability to protect them in those cases.

Mr. Martens: — I wonder if you would be able to provide some information for me in relation to SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency). Do you know how many assessments they do on an annual basis? Have you got any volume that you would be able to say, I have 6,853 new assessments that were done in the past year? Would you be able to give us that information?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I remember you were talking about the inspections, and we don't have that information. We can get it for you. SAMA does reassessments, if you like, on a rotational basis. And they usually go municipality by municipality. Occasionally there are pick-ups or reinspections that must be done as well.

So every municipality really has to have an appraiser working there in order to develop their assessment roll each year. Some of it applies to evaluation of properties on an ongoing basis, but some of it is going back maybe to look at property that had been appraised a year or two ago and doing a pick-up on it.

So we don't have that information. We can get it from SAMA, if you like. We are not directly integrated into SAMA's information. They are an independent organization and they

operate autonomously from government, and we don't have the information that you might like. But if I request it, I can get it for you.

(1215)

Mr. Martens: — Well I'd like that. As I see it here, there's a revenue-sharing adjustment for SAMA of \$1.1 million, and then another adjustment of \$800,000, and another 4 million, and another 1 million. And I think that I'd like to have that information.

I'd probably like to have the information of how many people are employed with SAMA, seeing kind of how many individuals are working there.

I'd also like to know from you whether this has ever been discussed within the framework of your department, of making SAMA an independent commercial operation, where they would be independent of government, seeking an opportunity to deal in an independent way as a commercial entity. These are probably professional engineers and surveyors. And would there be some way of making them completely independent of government?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes, thank you for that question, and there are a number of pieces to it that I would like to answer.

Going back to the estimates and the numbers that we have within our department, I want to explain how we have it separated into possibly three categories. First of all, there is \$4 million transfer to SAMA as an agency. We transfer that money under the legislation. That money is transferred to what we call to provide core services, that is, research policy development, data information and collection. It's a nucleus of SAMA, and it does all of the information and policy and analytical work that SAMA needs in order to develop assessment.

There is a \$1 million transitional fund this year as well that the government is providing for SAMA to pay for field services. If you will recall last year when we had the new SAMA Act, we divided it into two categories. One was the core services, which I just described to you, that provincial government funds. The other side are the field services who are the appraisers who go . . . or assessors who go out and actually develop the assessment rolls. And we provided \$1 million for that service to provide assistance to municipalities because municipalities now are responsible for hiring their own appraisers or else buying that service from SAMA. So there was \$1 million transitional fund to pay down the cost of field services.

Within the Municipal Government as well, we're putting back into revenue sharing about \$1.2 million, I don't know exactly what that number is, one point . . . I don't have my numbers here, but there is a number going back into urban revenue sharing that we had taken out last year. Again you will have to recall last year we took out \$2 million from revenue sharing to try to pay for SAMA.

When we brought in the new Act, what we did then was replace that \$2 million back into the revenue-sharing pool. And in the urban revenue sharing, that amounts now to \$1.167 million back onto the revenue-sharing side that last year went to SAMA, this year is not. And in the case of the rural municipalities, that amounts to \$8.33 million . . . or point eight three three, 833,000.

So that now is going directly into revenue sharing where last year it went in to pay for the cost of SAMA. So that's what you see here in regard to SAMA and its function and its operations.

In regard to how many people work at SAMA, there are 141 employees in 1995. Some of those employees will be employees who work in the core services doing research and data collection, and some of them will be the appraisers who work out developing the assessment rolls for the municipalities, and we call them field workers. But they belong to the Saskatchewan appraisers association.

And as you know, we have an Act coming forward this year that sets them up as an independent association. And there will be some changes coming forward in the next two or three years about their relationship with SAMA and the municipalities and whether they want to operate independently or they will still continue to operate under the direction of SAMA who will continue to provide their services to municipalities on a full cost-recovery basis, if that's what they want.

Mr. Martens: — So you're going to wait and see whether there would be any initiative on their part to see whether they would like to have independence as they go into this restructuring of what their responsibilities are.

I guess one of the questions that I would have is, is any of this urban revenue-sharing SAMA pool directed at the large urban centres who deal and supply their own service in this assessment business?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — When SAMA was set up in 1986, the four largest cities — Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Regina — were given the responsibility of funding their own assessment services. So since 1986 and perhaps earlier — I can't be definite about that but I know since 1986 when SAMA was established — the four major cities have always paid for their own assessment services.

The money that is going back into revenue sharing, some of it will go back to the four largest cities because, of course, they have access to the revenue-sharing pool, as everyone else does. What they do with it when they get their grant is up to them, but I would expect some of it would be going into general revenue fund and they may let it go to pay for their own assessment services.

But we don't know that. It's just the way the grant is transferred to them and they have a right to do with it what they want.

Mr. Martens: — Would you be able to give us a breakdown of

what Saskatoon, Regina, and P.A. and Moose Jaw each get?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes. You will recall that the revenue-sharing formula has been under review for quite some time. A lot of municipalities feel that it's outdated; that the revenue-sharing formula is based on assessment and a population base and some equalization is involved in it. And we have undertaken a review of that, so this year will be the last year that we hope we'll be using this outdated revenue-sharing formula. But under the present revenue-sharing formula, Regina this year was transferred \$10,954,389, and Saskatoon was transferred \$11,179,565.

Mr. Martens: — You could also give me Moose Jaw and P.A. if you've got them there. But I'd like to have the part in revenue sharing that was transferred that they spent in relation to the SAMA line on the budget here unless you don't have that separated out. But you obviously write a cheque for a certain amount for that purpose; you should have it lying there somewhere.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes, the amount I just gave you this year for Saskatoon included \$339,986 and the amount for Regina was \$335,544. For Prince Albert the amount was 48,740, and for Moose Jaw it's 44,357. That was the amount that came from what was originally the SAMA money, and it came back into revenue sharing, and that was part of their revenue-sharing grant this year.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:28 p.m.