

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 16, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these people that have signed this petition are from the Limerick, Coronach, over into McCord, Mankota area of the constituency.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition 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 come from the Lancer, Abbey, Leader, Sceptre area, south-west Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present petitions today sent in by Gibson International Carriers from Moose Jaw, and 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 toward 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 as I said, these come from the Assiniboia, Woodrow, Gravelbourg, and then mostly Regina and Moose Jaw area, and I'm happy to table these on behalf of those folks today.

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 allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Select Committee on Driving Safety

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Hagel, Chair of the Select Committee on Driving Safety, presents a report which is hereby tabled.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present the members of the Legislative Assembly with the report of the all-party Select Committee on Driving Safety.

Five months ago we were assigned the task of receiving public opinion and making recommendations on the driving and drinking counter-measures and the proposed highways and vehicles statutes amendments Act of 1994, the proposed regulatory changes and the paper entitled "Probationary Licence Program for New Drivers" and other matters related to driving safety. Today we present 49 recommendations and a report upon which consensus was reached on every single recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) on the committee are all proud of our province, but there are some things in Saskatchewan about which we are not proud.

In recent years on average we have been losing one teenager on Saskatchewan roads every 10 days. In recent years we have been losing three people on average every two weeks in a crash involving a drinking driver. Forty to 50 per cent of our deaths on the road every year are in crashes that involve a drinking driver. Unfortunately when it comes to impaired driving, our record is among the worst in the nation.

And, Mr. Speaker, the committee heard from over 200 people at public hearings in 16 communities, met with over 3,000 students at 19 high schools, received over 100 written briefs, and received nearly 7,000 responses to its questionnaires.

The people of Saskatchewan told us loud and clear that something has to be done to reduce the loss of lives and make our roads safer, and we agree. The committee recommends that we get tough and sensible in dealing with impaired driving.

Mr. Speaker, for over 20 years the blood alcohol content that triggered a roadside suspension for drivers in Saskatchewan has been .06 per cent. Many people, including many teenagers, told

us that the safest blood alcohol tolerance for drivers is zero. And they're right.

The committee recommends a coordinated advertising campaign promoting the safety of zero blood alcohol content. However, we recognize that there is a difference between a worthy goal and an enforceable limit which can be consistently applied and over which there will be a penalty imposed by provincial law.

The committee recommends that Saskatchewan's blood alcohol tolerance should be reduced to .04 per cent for all drivers, giving us the lowest blood alcohol tolerance in the nation.

We recommend that licence suspensions for impaired driving should be increased, giving Saskatchewan the toughest licence suspension legislation in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, in a section I call wellness on the highway, the committee recommends the most comprehensive and constructive remedial requirements for impaired drivers anywhere in North America.

Conviction for impaired driving should be considered a potential symptom of alcohol dependency and an assessment should be required of every convicted impaired driver. If addicted, treatment should be required, and if not, completion of a driving without impairment course should be required before getting back the driver's licence. Successful completion of the proper remedial activity should make the driver safer and lead to a reduction of the licence suspension.

To reinforce longer suspensions, Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that those who continue to drive after having had their driving privileges suspended should have the vehicle they are driving impounded, as is the case in Manitoba and Alberta.

We also recommend that there should be a quick and fair appeal mechanism available.

To reduce the loss of life involving new drivers, the committee recommends that Saskatchewan join every other province in Canada and introduce a probationary licence for new drivers, which is based on the successful model used in Saskatoon for the past several years.

We also make recommendations which reinforce the role of driver education to train new drivers to be safe drivers and which reinforce the value of designated-driver programs.

Mr. Speaker, the committee believes our recommendations, in combination, will go a long way towards reducing the number of lives lost on the roads of our province and make significant progress towards the national commitment to reduce traffic fatalities by 25 per cent over the next five years.

The committee would also like to acknowledge the high level of interest and input we received from Saskatchewan teens. They left us feeling confident that the future of our province is

in good hands. Responsibility and fairness are embedded solidly in the hearts and minds of Saskatchewan's teenagers.

And, Mr. Speaker, I extend the committee's thanks for the very professional assistance provided by Legislative Assembly staff, from the Clerk's office and from *Hansard*.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues on the committee who serve in all three political parties. They worked gruelling hours with diligence and with the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan always in mind. It was an honour and pleasure to work with the members who consistently applied themselves to achieve our objective and who worked together well in the spirit of true parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the individual and collective efforts of my colleagues — the hon. member from Maple Creek, the hon. member for Regina North West, the hon. member for the Saltcoats, the hon. member from Meadow Lake, and the hon. member for Kinistino, and the hon. member for Saskatoon River Heights, and particularly the Vice-Chair of the committee, the hon. member for Souris-Cannington.

Mr. Speaker, with the passing of the resolution, the committee ceases to exist, and in my view they have been an excellent committee for sure.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Souris-Cannington, that the report of the Select Committee on Driving Safety be concurred in. I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to be able to second the motion moved by the member from Moose Jaw Palliser.

Our caucus supports the basic principles presented in this report. The public and the committee spent a significant amount of time arriving at these conclusions. Mr. Speaker, it's true that it took a great deal of cooperation to arrive at the recommendations brought forward today.

In many cases, it also took several hours of debate on each point and much compromising from all sides. Although at times, Mr. Speaker, the debates were quite intense, the recommendations contained in this report are brought forward in the spirit of cooperation.

Having said that, I hope that the section in the report referred to as wellness on the highway is much more successful than the government's attempt at wellness in health care, which has proven to be quite unsuccessful, especially in the rural areas.

However, measures such as two-year probationary licences for new drivers and longer suspensions for those caught driving after having their licence suspended will surely improve the safety conditions on Saskatchewan's roads.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend groups such as SADD — Students Against Drinking and Driving — who have organized themselves and worked effortlessly for years to toughen the laws regarding drinking and driving. Throughout the year, and especially around grad night, we hear of teens who have lost their lives due to having drinks at parties and climbing behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Organizations like SADD, MADD (Mothers Against Drinking Drivers), SCARED (Saskatchewan Citizens Advocating Responsible Educated Drivers), groups of concerned parents and school officials have done their part by providing dry grads which have proven to be successful. As well, their lobbying efforts shine through in the recommendations in this report today.

Mr. Speaker, alcohol has been a problem for mankind as long as the process of fermentation and distillation have existed. In this country the great Prohibition experiment failed, and the results since its repeal have not been much better. There is still far too much violence within homes, partly caused by alcohol, far too much alcohol abuse passed on from generation to generation.

But it is not only within the homes that the abuse takes place. Mr. Speaker, alcohol is still regarded by crime and health authorities as creating more victims than drugs, and unfortunately in the case of drinking and driving, more often than not the victims are innocent bystanders — other travellers on our roads and highways — not the offenders. All too often the victims are our youth.

The other important issue in this report deals with education. A number of fatalities are a result of inexperience or lack of knowledge on driving and road conditions. We support the recommendations to provide opportunities for new drivers to gain additional experience before receiving a regular driver's licence.

The educational opportunities for all new drivers will be enhanced by requiring participation in drivers' education without regard to whether or not the new driver is part of our high school education system.

By this, Mr. Speaker, I mean that individuals who have had no driving experience, regardless of age or origin, will be required to partake in the drivers' education classes as well as meet the probationary licence requirements. This provides for new business opportunities throughout the province for driver education institutions.

The one concern, Mr. Speaker, that I have with these recommendations will be the necessity to build a larger bureaucracy to deal with addiction assessments and impoundment of vehicles. This is an area in which the public and the opposition will have to be especially vigilant to ensure that abuses do not occur.

We believe there are many good points within these

recommendations that will enhance the safety of the public. Mr. Speaker, losing just one life a year due to drinking and driving is too many. It is unacceptable.

Safety for Saskatchewan families must always be at the forefront of the agenda of all elected officials. And I am proud to say that this report will help make strides towards this goal.

I would like to thank the staff of the legislature for their excellent support during our committee work, and also like to thank the other committee members for their cooperation and their dedication towards the safety of the public on the highways.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to second the motion made by the member from Moose Jaw Palliser.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to endorse the recommendations in the report to the Select Committee on Driving Safety. As a member of the committee, I too wish to acknowledge the non-partisan teamwork and dedication to serving the interests of all Saskatchewan people which I observed and was part of.

As the member from Moose Jaw Palliser, Chair of the committee, has so very concisely and ably outlined the major recommendations of the report, I would like to just make a few comments on behalf of the third party caucus.

As Education critic, I was impressed by the role of teachers and driver educators in preparing Saskatchewan youth for a lifetime of driving. In their presentations, they gave us many good reasons why driver education is critically important for the successful implementation of the full range of the committee's recommendations. Prevention is the best medicine for the factors leading to Saskatchewan's poor record in crashes and fatalities associated with impaired and unsafe driving. That is one of the reasons the report recommends mandatory driver training for all new drivers.

I was also very impressed with the knowledge, commitment, and the provincial and national network of the Students Against Drunk Driving. Not only did they make well-conceived presentations in many different communities, but they monitored and updated their presentations through those networks while the committee travelled. They are an excellent role model, not only for teens but for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, the committee's recommendations on reduced blood alcohol content levels resulting in administrative suspensions will send the message that alcohol consumption and driving don't mix, as we work towards future implementation of a zero tolerance level.

The recommendations concerning probationary licences, mandatory assessment, longer suspensions, and impoundment of vehicles, are critical in reducing the traffic fatalities and

injuries on Saskatchewan's highways.

I too would like to thank the other members of the committee and the members of the legislative staff who assisted in the putting together of this report.

And in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to concur in the tabling of the report of the Select Committee on Driving Safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the Select Committee on Driving Safety, I would like to take this opportunity to table my report. This is not a dissenting report, Mr. Speaker, but a collection of alternatives on some of the issues that one member of the select committee believes would better serve the interests of the general public than the position taken by the committee.

The proposals made by the committee could lead to the development of a very large, very expensive bureaucracy. The proposals include potential cases of conflict of interest between SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and the Highway Traffic Board versus the general public. In addition, some of the technical points, i.e., the .04 blood alcohol content, were also not what the committee heard the general public asking for.

My report is based on 64 pages of personal notes and the volumes of material presented by those who attended meetings, mailed in briefs, and many studies and statistical volumes.

Most people appreciated the opportunity to dialogue directly with MLAs on this issue. Unfortunately, only four one-thousandths of the population were included, with many counted more than once because several people attended more than one meeting. This issue was mostly precluded as acceptable in general principle through tours and interviews conducted across the province over the past two years by departmental officials.

Most people refer to this as a motherhood issue. It was clear from the outset that no government in their right mind would table a 22-page set of amendments to the driving laws and then spend close to \$100,000 on a public relations road show unless they had preplanned changes that would legitimize the process and give the impression that people had been consulted.

Many are asking, would this money not have been better spent on a tour consulting the general public on more controversial issues such as health care or the labour laws. There must never be, Mr. Speaker, a complete dead-end law. Those who have no hope of regaining privileges have nothing to lose and will do anything, leaving incarceration as the only alternative. Judges in our society and in our system must have the final say.

I feel that the committee basically rubber-stamped a process that had been precluded by government officials. I did enjoy the tour and found it personally educational, having the opportunity to see and visit much of the province, some of

which I had not seen before. The officials and staff are to be complimented on a very professional job well done.

In conclusion I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that a discretionary law becomes a discriminatory law, and wellness on the highways is certainly a political stretch.

I observed four areas of concern. Number one, I believe that the high cost to taxpayers will be prohibitive.

Number two, I believe that there is a conflict of interest between SGI, the Highway Traffic Board, versus the general public inherently built into these recommendations.

And number three, I believe that the large bureaucracy that will be established will become nothing but a home for NDP (New Democratic Party) political friends.

Number four, I believe that significant changes to rural society and cultural realities will occur. I foresee the death of the hotel industry in rural Saskatchewan, with hotels becoming nothing but common gaming houses.

I enjoyed the company of all who were on the tour, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have a better understanding of one another. If those of us who were on the tour become better parliamentarians for the effort extended, then that alone perhaps can justify the exercise. I will table this now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a guest sitting in the west gallery. His name is Jim Poitras. He was born and raised in Moose Jaw. He makes his home now in Victoria.

I first met Jim when he was commissioned to do work for the First Nations Gallery at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. Jim's work can be found in galleries and collections across Canada and United States and Australia and some Asian countries. And we're very proud that Jim comes back and sees us once in a while, and I would like to say welcome, Jim, and ask the members of the Assembly to welcome you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you two guests who are seated in your gallery, and introducing through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly. I'll ask them to stand as I introduce each of them.

First of all, I'd like to introduce Mr. Jason Dubois. Mr. Dubois is the provincial president of the Students Against Drinking and Driving and has been president of SADD since 1993. He's a

pre-administration student at the University of Regina and was 1994 Saskatchewan junior citizen of the year.

Many members will recognize that in looking at the report that his organization was an active participant in speaking to the Select Committee on Driving Safety, and he's here representing many other teens from around the province. He also serves currently as the youth representative on Saskatchewan's council on children — so, Mr. Jason Dubois.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — The other person I'd like to introduce, Mr. Speaker, to the members of the Assembly is Mr. Dave Abbey. Mr. Abbey served as the research officer for the Select Committee on Driving Safety. He was seconded to the committee from his position as manager of legislation and safety for the traffic safety branch of the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Those of us who served on the committee were neither surprised and in fact quite enjoyed that he was recently acknowledged by the Saskatchewan Safety Council as Saskatchewan's number one safety zealot. We were very pleased to have him working together with us in support of the Select Committee on Driving Safety — Mr. Dave Abbey.

Welcome to both of these gentlemen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, two constituents and friends of mine from Cut Knife-Lloydminster. In the west gallery are seated Tom Crush and Joe Holden, and they are in this week for hearings, and we wish them success and hope that they have a good trip home.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member from Moose Jaw Palliser in welcoming Jason Dubois and the members of the SADD group here today. They followed us around just about every committee hearing if not every one of them, and I think it's appropriate that they should be in the Assembly today, and also like to officially recognize Mr. Dave Abbey as the number one safety zealot with the Safety Council and Department of Highways. I would like everyone to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Neilburg Cellular Service Launch

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to announce today that community of Neilburg and its surrounding area have joined SaskTel Mobility cellular

network. SaskTel Mobility has the province's largest cellular network and is expanding to Neilburg to better serve its customers. Cellular service is a remarkable communications tool. The convenience and sense of security it provides have revolutionized people's ability to keep in touch with one another.

Residents and travellers in the Neilburg area will use this tool to meet their communication needs at home, at work, and on the road. Nearly 85 per cent of Saskatchewan residents live within cellular coverage areas. That number will grow in 1995 as SaskTel Mobility moves forward with its ambitious expansion of cellular service in this province. Since the company's origin, it has grown to become the fourth largest member of Mobility Canada, an alliance of the country's 11 leading cellular providers.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I welcome the residents of Neilburg to SaskTel Mobility cellular service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ituna and Grayson Schools Celebrate Education Week

Mr. Carlson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge two schools in south-eastern Saskatchewan that are doing their part to help celebrate Education Week. Activities which have already been held at Ituna School this week include a slide presentation, motivational media presentation, a grandparents' tea, and a science fair, with prizes being awarded to the best display and the best project. Today there is an opportunity for the parents to get involved during the parent open house.

Mr. Speaker, Grayson School is heavily involved in Education Week activities as well. On Monday students from grades 5 and 6 visited the Science Centre and the IMAX theatre in Regina. Perhaps one day these students will be able to see the film about the Tyrannosaurus-rex skeleton at Eastend, at the IMAX theatre of course. That exciting project was recently announced by the province. The film should be available for the public to see by the middle of 1996.

Yesterday grade 7 and 9 students at Grayson School paid a visit to the old and new elevators in Waldron, and today there is a kids' convention which includes ice-cream making, bread baking, and wheat weaving.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate both of these schools for coming up with unique and inspirational ways of participating in Education Week activities. They are definitely making tomorrow come true. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kamsack Students Chosen for Cadet Honour Band

Mr. Knezacek: — During Education Week we should remind ourselves that our children learn much more at our schools than the three R's, important as they are. They also have the

opportunity to practise the arts, to gain practical skills, and in some cases, to become proficient music makers.

Three students from Kamsack are examples of the last group. Bobbi Hunko, Angela McElroy, and Trisha McElroy have been selected as members of the 1995 prairie region cadet honour band. They learned from Kamsack Comprehensive Institute music teacher Dave Wenner, and they now take their skills to a larger group which will perform for larger audiences.

These three members of the Kamsack air cadet squadron will join 90 other sea, army, and air cadets from across the Prairies to form the cadet honour band. This band will perform a musical celebration in honour of the Navy League of Canada's 100th anniversary.

It will play concerts in Edmonton on April 3, in Saskatoon April 5, and in Winnipeg on April 7. The concert will also consist of traditional military music as well as some classical, popular, and jazz selections.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful opportunity for these students, an opportunity all the more appropriate because they earned it by learning their instruments, by practising, by attending rehearsals, and by dedication. Mr. Speaker, hard work is fun and it pays off.

My congratulations to Bobbi, Angela, and Trisha.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Week Activities

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many other schools around the province, the schools in the school divisions in my area of the province are celebrating Education Week with a wide variety of events.

First, to remind us that education does not end at grade 12 or age 18, the Southeast Regional College will have an open house in which its post-secondary course offerings will be showcased. Also the college will make a presentation on literacy to remind us that it is never too late to learn or to learn more.

The public and separate schools in Weyburn have a tremendous variety of offerings — everything from lunch-time theatre to field hockey and line dancing. The schools in Prairie View are hosting kids' conventions, guest speakers from AIDS Regina, and open houses in which parents are actively participating in learning activities.

Radville School Division had trustee tours, science fairs, open houses, a medieval dinner. And today everybody in the Radville School Division will be seeing a performance by Saskatchewan Express.

Whether it be reading displays, science projects, Irish music,

health and wellness seminars, or Easter egg painting, these special events during this special week all serve one purpose, and that is to show us that learning is not only important, but can be fun.

Congratulations to our students, educators, trustees, and parents on maintaining excellence and enthusiasm in our schools — as the Education Week theme states, making tomorrow come true.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Week in North-east Saskatchewan

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Education Week is in full speed and neither a recess bell nor the end of the school day can stop the many activities planned.

As one of the members from north-east Saskatchewan, I'm proud to report on some of the activities in that area. For example, Mr. Speaker, the Ridgedale School will host a community convention on Friday. All day students and parents can learn about native dance, Easter egg painting, computers, wildlife conservation, and hunter safety — to name just a few.

Sylvania School will sponsor a "partners in learning" convention for parents and students, as well as a science fair. Zenon Park School will have a career day for K to 12 and a drama presentation by the high school.

The Dag Hammarskjöld School in Tisdale has some exciting events planned. All week, grade 1 students will be reading to kindergarten classes, a wellness coordinator will speak to students, and various classes will visit the local co-op to learn about buying groceries — something I notice a few of our MLAs wish that they could take part in.

There are other unique events in Tisdale, including a public meeting of the town council at the composite high school. The Tisdale Public School will have an open house, a book fair, and square dancing. Tisdale teachers are active in initiatives dealing with curriculum and the changing classroom environment.

Mr. Speaker, this is only part of a list of the activities that are taking place in the north-east. And I want to commend all the students, the parents, the staff, and division officials in and around Tisdale for their contribution to Education Week. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Tire Technician Challenge

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatoon once again proves its excellence. On March 12, mechanics from all over Saskatchewan gave up their Sunday afternoon to compete in the Canadian Tire technician challenge at the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology)

institute in Saskatoon. Each team was given seven vehicles with different automotive problems. They had to isolate the problem and fix each vehicle within 20 minutes.

They were given instructions just as if a customer had come in with a problem. You know the kind of instructions, Mr. Speaker, quote: It makes a funny gurgling noise; or the thingumajig just doesn't work any more. End quote.

The competitors were all journeyman mechanics. Prior to the practical competition they also had to write an exam. For the second year in a row, the winning team was from the Canadian Tire Store in Circle Park Mall in my riding of Saskatoon Wildwood. They won a trip to the Indy car race in Vancouver at the end of August. Not only did the Circle Park Mall Canadian Tire Store win the competition, Myles Sarich from their automotive service department scored highest in the written exam.

I congratulate them all.

Their service manager, Don Funk, assistant service manager Rob Stonehouse, and Canadian Tire Circle Park store owner Ian Van Norman, obviously provide great guidance and great opportunities for their staff to excel in automotive service. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gaming Expansion

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I want to put my attention to the minister responsible for gambling.

Madam Minister, you and your gambling partners appear to be moving at maximum speed to establish a chain of Las Vegas-style casinos around the province, while the trains in Saskatchewan have ground to a halt.

The chief of the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) told SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) delegates that casino sites are being fast-tracked and that at least one casino is going to be opened by fall or as early as this summer.

While this is going on, Madam Minister, at least one segment of society is booming — and that is the attendance at Gamblers Anonymous meetings. Two years ago, Gamblers Anonymous was a small circle, meeting once a week with about five members. Now, according to the *Star-Phoenix*, this group holds three meetings a week with 75 people attempting to control their gambling addiction.

Madam Minister, don't you think this should be a warning bell? Don't you think you had better take a look at your entire gaming expansion policy and its effect on Saskatchewan

families before you allow your gambling partners to go on fast track?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd like to thank the member for his question, giving me a chance to get up and answer.

You may have noticed in the paper a couple days ago that a Liberal opposition member in Alberta endorsed the Saskatchewan policy because at least we were taking steps to deal with issues related to gaming and on-reserve/off-reserve issues. And he felt that we were doing well in setting up revenue-sharing arrangements that made people benefit equally from gaming proceeds.

Regarding your question on fast-tracking feasibility, we have agreed with the federation to a six- to eight-month period for negotiation, after which approvals would be made. And we certainly don't, either one of us — despite the fact that much work is going on in the meantime — intend to veer off that agreement.

Your final question, about increased use of the program . . . I think any traffic officer would tell you that when you have increased traffic enforcement you catch more people in the net because you have an increased ability to respond. So I would say that our increased ability to respond is providing an opportunity for people with difficulties to come forward. And I think it's a good thing that the programs are in place. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, it would be a better thing if those programs were not needed, and they're needed because of your initiative, Mr. Premier. And it's also interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that they are now approving of the policy of Mr. Klein in Alberta.

But, Madam Minister, let me tell you what your slot machines are actually doing to Saskatchewan people. And please listen now, and listen carefully. Yesterday a 40-year-old Kindersley man pleaded guilty to a charge of theft after admitting that he stole over \$11,000 from St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church to feed his gambling addiction. He stole over \$11,000 from a church.

This man's lawyer, Madam Minister, lashed out at you, saying you really have to question how many lives have to be destroyed. Madam Minister, that's a good question. Why don't you answer that question for the Assembly this afternoon. How many lives have to be destroyed before you will recognize the problem? How many lives have to be destroyed before you realize the error and the folly of your ways? Madam Minister, it is you and your Premier that are being held directly responsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I thank the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask whether you would suggest that we would then ban alcohol and ban cigarettes because people do not necessarily make the best decisions in regard to using them.

I might mention that we're the only province in Canada that has an education and prevention program at the high school level and are putting the largest amount of funds into prevention and education programs. And I think it's important that we take a proactive approach to dealing with these problems. We could ignore them; we could pretend they don't exist; and we could do a lot of things.

But we are not like Mr. Klein in Alberta. We deal with them, and we control and regulate, and we deal with the problems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, this simply isn't good enough. Somebody on that side of the House has to take responsibility for this kind of misery. And I say it's the member for Riversdale, the Premier of this province, that should take responsibility.

Mr. Premier, the gentleman from Kindersley had never been to Las Vegas, had bought very few lottery tickets in his life, but as soon as you placed slot machines all over the place, as he said, I got a high from it. Those machines are like the crack cocaine of gambling.

Mr. Premier, do you have any idea what you're doing to people across this province, or do you care? Mr. Premier, it's time you stood and responded to the consequences of your actions instead of spewing your condescending political rhetoric all the time. Mr. Premier, if this gentlemen were standing in this Assembly today, what would you say to that man?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I would have to say that I have a great deal of empathy for this gentleman, and I find it unfortunate that he had such a difficult learning experience here with the decisions that he made regarding this.

But the fact is, I find it a bit unusual. If any of you are familiar with AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), the first step in recovery when you are involved in AA is to admit that you have a problem, and I'm not sure why the first step in gaming addiction is to admit that the government has a problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, you say he has a difficult learning experience. Gambling has destroyed his life; that's what it's done to him and his family. It has nothing to do with any learning experience.

Not only are your slot machines taking donations away from charities and church groups, these organizations are now being robbed by gambling addicts to feed their habit, Madam Minister.

And in response to this, you, Madam Minister, have the gall to blame churches and charities for the expansion of gambling in Saskatchewan. You were the one who said — and the Premier was the one who said, incidentally — if it's no to gambling and gambling is bad, it should be no to bingos or no to charities; it should also be no to the children's wish foundation.

Well as the *Star-Phoenix* said, and I quote: What pathetic, self-serving sophistry for Romanow to lump church basement bingos and charity raffles with big casinos and VLTs. End quote.

Mr. Premier, will you slow down this fast track? Will you stop your gluttonous money grab long enough to talk to the people that you are destroying the lives of all across this province, to listen to them, to hear what they have to say about the problems you have created for them, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I appreciate the member's question, and I'm sure you'll join me in writing to Mr. Klein, suggesting that he take some control over his gaming policy.

Again I would have to take it back to the issue of there are some things which develop in society, and I really think that our best approach is to deal with them.

And I'll remind you again of alcohol abuse in this society. We have transition houses, shelters, family service bureaus, many services set up. I have not heard you once ask that we repeal the liquor laws in this province. We have drinking and driving legislation on the books. One of your own members gets up and expresses reservation on dealing with this problem of drinking and driving.

Under your administration there was a 2,500 per cent increase in privatized bingo, large-scale gaming. And you were the ones that directly robbed the charities and the small halls of their community-scale bingos at that time. So I don't really understand your point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Firearms Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, yesterday the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities delegates unanimously passed three separate resolutions opposing Liberal gun laws. Two of the three resolutions called on the province to take specific action on this matter. Not just talk about gun laws, but take real action and do something.

Mr. Minister, is your government going to continue to ignore SARM and the Saskatchewan gun owners by continuing to do nothing. When will you start taking legislative action to protect gun owners, like SARM is recommending?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it is generally agreed by at least the official opposition and the government in this Assembly that this law should not be passed. I think it's only a question of what would be effective in trying to oppose it.

It strikes me that one thing that might be effective is if we could ever get a clear statement out of the members of the third party on what the gun law should say. Your position is clear. Our position is clear. What is not clear to anyone is where the Leader of the Third Party stands on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what the public would like out of you is a clear statement on what you're going to do.

Mr. Minister, one of the resolutions passed at SARM called for the province to gain control of registration. That's exactly what the private members' Bill I introduced last week is designed to do. Yet you oppose that Bill, Mr. Minister, because your party is ideologically opposed to property rights.

A second resolution calls on the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and create a made-in-Saskatchewan gun law, a solution first suggested by the Leader of the Opposition several months ago.

Mr. Minister, later today I will introduce a Bill that does exactly what SARM is asking for — use the notwithstanding clause to protect the rights of owners of firearms in Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, will you support this Bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I say again to members opposite that I think the official opposition and the government agrees that the cost of this Bill is all out of proportion to any benefit which might be derived from it. And I think that's generally agreed. It is simply a question of what might be effective in opposing it.

And I think it is also agreed by almost the entire legal community, there's no effective legal mechanism or legislative mechanism which we can take. The most effective thing we can do is to make representations to the federal government. Only the power of public opinion is going to stop them.

We have . . . I say, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly passed the motion providing for an all-party delegation to make a presentation to Ottawa. Perhaps if we could ever catch the third party in a quiet moment and get them to join with us, perhaps

we might be able to get the standing committee to come to Saskatchewan. I think that would be useful if they actually came here and heard us here.

That's the kind of thing we need — a united stand by all parties in this House, and not one of the parties in this House desperately hopping around, back and forth, trying to avoid the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, we agree that we're opposed to the federal Liberal legislation. The difference being we're prepared to try and do something about it, and you are not.

Mr. Minister, I asked the legislative legal counsel and Law Clerk for a constitutional opinion on this Bill because you were quoting that the last Bill I presented would not be constitutional. And I have his response here, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

The Constitution Act, 1982 did not repeal, rather, it effectively continued the Act of 1867 as a part of the Constitution of Canada, thus the exclusive authority for the provincial legislature to enact laws with respect to "property and civil rights" is preserved, and extends to the subject Bill respecting property rights in Saskatchewan.

He goes on to say that because the Bill makes an expressed declaration, that it operates notwithstanding the charter, it is constitutional in every aspect. This Bill is constitutional in every aspect, Mr. Minister, according to the legal counsel of this legislature.

Mr. Minister, while your government has used the law as an excuse to do nothing, we the opposition have used that law to develop solutions. Mr. Minister, will you do what SARM and responsible owners are requesting? Will you take action and support the two private members' Bills I've introduced?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, illustrative of our problem in presenting a united front to the federal government on gun control were the votes of a couple of days ago on Tuesday on the Crow rate. We had three votes during the day. Finally caught the member from Shaunavon napping and got him in the House and got a vote. But it took four votes to actually catch them in the House.

If we could ever get the members of the third party napping again, if we could ever get them in here for a vote, if we could present a united front to the federal government, that is by far and away the most effective thing we could do. And we look forward to all parties of this House joining us in this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Board Deficits

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in today's *Leader-Post* the Health minister promised to release all district health board budgets for '93-94. And I'll quote from the article: but the minister said he first needs to have a little analysis done.

It is very disturbing that the current fiscal year is coming to an end in just two short weeks and the minister hasn't even analysed the financial statements from '93-94, especially when he stated in this House that he was working closely with these boards in the formulation of their financial affairs.

My question is to the Minister of Health. Explain to the House today: how did you develop the 1995 budget for your department if you have not yet finalized the financial status of health district boards from '93-94?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is becoming almost a daily routine for myself that I have to come into the legislature and explain to the people of Saskatchewan the misrepresentation of facts that come from that member and the Liberal caucus. This is becoming a daily assignment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I made that commitment yesterday and those figures will be released.

The analysis that's being done is to prevent the kind of misinformation that you've been tabling and spreading in the public and, if I may say, faxing all over the province, talking about deficits that do not exist when the analysis is done. In fact the deficit that the Liberal leader said was over a hundred thousand dollars in fact becomes a surplus of \$400,000 if the Liberal caucus could read a financial statement.

Mr. Speaker, I make that commitment to this House and to the people. Those figures will be made public, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, Mr. Minister, you're not in control of your own department.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table three more district health board financial statements that show projected or planned — planned — deficits for the 1994-95 fiscal year. The law states that any projected deficits must have the approval of the minister. We just keep seeing pieces of information dribbling out.

Mr. Minister, by law you must approve all these deficits, so will you not now just release how many district health boards will be in a deficit situation this year?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to be

in Battleford this morning. I arrived back to my office and I find yet another communication from yet another health district complaining about the antics of the Liberal caucus trying to misinform the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote again from a memo that had to go to every staff person in the Midwest Health District because of the mischief these people are playing there. It says in this memo to all staff: it is quite evident that those responsible for the release of this information were wanting — wanting — to create a smokescreen.

Why would they do that, Mr. Speaker? It's only for their own political advantage. And then I read today, Mr. Speaker, in the *Star-Phoenix*, the Leader of the Liberal Party suggesting that the province of Saskatchewan is receiving more money for health, education, and social services.

The member, the leader, the one who would be premier, doesn't understand the difference between equalization payments and payments to social, health, and education. Mr. Speaker, the cuts coming from Ottawa are drastic, Mr. Speaker, and the Liberal leader should not confuse the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, they're your own documents and you can't even answer to them.

Mr. Speaker, your government has stated that it is going to introduce balanced budget legislation which has not yet been seen in this House. But this legislation is a must to ensure the fiscal security of our province.

And the government has implemented legislation that is supposed to stop deficit budgets in district health boards. But we currently have 16 examples of districts that have government approval to create deficits. So how can you expect the people of Saskatchewan to take your assurances of deficit legislation serious when you don't take your own deficit legislation serious?

My question is to the Minister of Health. What assurances will the people of Saskatchewan have if and when we see your government's balanced budget legislation that will not allow for these deferred deficits?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me make one or two points.

The members opposite in the Liberal caucus do not seem to understand that in a financial statement it will show capital, it will show depreciation, it will show operations. Mr. Speaker, if you take some of the numbers that the member and his leader have been putting all over the province and separate out depreciations and capital issues, you will find that 10 out of 11 that they say have a deficit in fact have an operating surplus.

Mr. Speaker, there are deficits. No one is hiding from that fact.

There are deficits in some health districts, deficits that have been inherited from institutional deficits, deficits that are related to one-time severance, and so on, Mr. Speaker. Our projections would show that the deficit picture this year — and it's only a projection because the fiscal year end is not yet here — our projections would show that the entire amount will be less than 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, less than 1 per cent of all the funding to districts.

We're concerned about that, Mr. Speaker, and we're working with each and every district in developing management plans to be sure that each of our health districts are in a surplus, or balanced situation, because we want medicare and we will guarantee that medicare is sustainable for our people well into the next century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Smoking Legislation

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is as well to the Minister of Health. The other day, Mr. Minister, I asked your government why it is not proceeding with Bill 68, the anti-smoking legislation introduced last year. A number of organizations have come to us asking — and they've probably written you, Mr. Minister — asking why you aren't proceeding with this.

It seems to me your government has indicated that they're going to let the federal Liberal government do it. And yet, Mr. Minister, what have we seen the federal government doing? Why don't you take responsibility, your responsibility on this provincial matter, and respond to the organizations out there asking why you will not reintroduce Bill 68 and show leadership at this time? Will you proceed with this Act, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the member for his question because he touches on an issue that is extremely important, extremely important to the health status of our province.

Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, the federal government did in fact change legislation and regulation around the sale of tobacco products to minors about a year ago, essentially raising the age of sale to the age 18 is the major change.

However, Mr. Speaker, what has sincerely disappointed us and people across Saskatchewan is that they have not followed through with enforcement mechanisms. There are only two, Mr. Speaker, only two officers of enforcement in the province of Saskatchewan. For our House to move now to even toughen those regulations without proper enforcement measures in place seems to me to be of an academic exercise.

So in this calendar year we are working with the federal government to build into our province the enforcement

mechanisms that we know can be effective when we look at changes in regulation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister. Mr. Minister, the Saskatchewan Lung Association says that it is no coincidence that Saskatchewan has both the weakest provincial legislation in this area and the highest rates of smoking among young people in Canada. They call your rationale for abandoning questionable and they say your government needs to show its fair share of leadership.

Even SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) is condemning your government's decision to withdraw this legislation. And I quote from one of their recommendations:

Thus, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations supports strong provincial legislation restricting tobacco sales to minors that goes beyond the minimum standard set by federal legislation.

Mr. Minister, earlier today we heard your government has shown absolutely no leadership on the problem of gambling addiction. Will you show some leadership on this issue, Mr. Minister, instead of passing the buck to the Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member there is no sense of passing the buck. Legislation and regulation are one very important and significant part of dealing with the issue of smoking, particularly among young people. That's certain.

But let me say that is certainly not the only tool, and that's not the only reasonable means to travel in trying to achieve goals here. And in fact we are working diligently and fast-forward in some of these other areas.

We've initiated a brand-new educational campaign, particularly among the very young students in our province. Only last week, a whole package of information and helps to retailers who have to deal with this over the counter on a daily basis, to assist them in their work . . . because we know the retailers share our goals in this regard.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member, as I've said to many of the organizations to which he refers, we are concerned about this issue, we are continuing to look at the possibility of legislation, we want to put in legislation that can be enforced across our province, and therefore we're working on enforcement mechanisms. Meanwhile, the federal law raising the age of sale to 18 does apply in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 48 — An Act respecting the Property Rights of the People of Saskatchewan

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill respecting the Property Rights of the People of Saskatchewan.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Personal Report Ruled Out of Order

The Speaker: — Order. Before orders of the day, I wish to make a Speaker's statement on what happened in the report that was brought forward today in the legislature.

In the debate on the report of the Driving Safety Committee earlier today, the member for Maple Creek sought to table his own report, separate from that of the committee.

While the member has the right to express whatever views he wishes with respect to the committee report, it is a long-standing practice that a member of a committee may not table a minority report or a personal report in the House.

In this regard I refer members to Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, paragraph 870, page 240, as follows:

(1) It is the opinion of the committee, as a committee, not that of the individual members, which is required by the House, and, failing unanimity, the conclusions agreed to by the majority are the conclusions of the committee.

(2) It is the custom to include the opinions of dissenting members in a committee report. No separate minority report may be tabled in the House.

I also refer members to a ruling of the Chair of this Assembly, May 29, 1986, where an attempt to table a personal report was ruled out of order, as not authorized by the committee.

I also refer members to a ruling of this Assembly on May 22, 1980, where a minority report was not allowed to be attached to the report of the committee.

I therefore find that the document requested to be tabled cannot be received.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Neudorf: — On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, the statement that you concluded cannot be tabled . . . I understand that as a member I can table whatever I feel should be tabled as an individual report or statement or whatever, and thus become part of the record, even though that record . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The Speaker's statement cannot be challenged or questioned by the member. No comments will be received.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 22

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Renaud that **Bill No. 22 — An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this Assembly and address Bill No. 22, An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment.

Yes, the Government House Leader indicated that this certainly is a good Bill. Well, Mr. Minister, I think there are . . . or, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of points we'd like to bring out about this Bill that, in our minds, indicate that this Bill is not actually the good Bill that the Government House Leader is indicating it is, and that there are some questions and concerns that need to be raised. In fact it would seem to me this Bill sort of reminds me of the recent political scandal involving the NDP government of British Columbia. And let me refresh your memories.

The case, which I'm sure the members will be familiar with, is that of a cabinet minister who is under investigation, except instead of stepping down, they just made him minister without portfolio so that he could continue to draw a minister's salary and perks. I am sure that all members would agree that such a policy is shocking in its sheer corruptness.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, in our minds, seeks to create a Crown corporation without portfolio. The question comes up time and time again as we examine this Bill. What does this proposed corporation do? What is the purpose of this corporation? What is the reason for Bill No. 22 being brought before this Assembly?

The inevitable conclusion that any fair-minded person must

time and time again come to is — nothing. This Crown corporation will do nothing that is not already being done.

Will this corporation build roads? No. The department will continue to do that — the Department of Highways, that has already been given the responsibility for road construction in this province, will indeed continue to build roads. Not this corporation that this government is building up. Will this corporation partner with the federal government on infrastructure projects? No. The feds have already withdrawn their commitment to this proposal.

These are the two ideas, Mr. Speaker, on which this Crown was originally premissed and announced, and they are both hollow and empty. After the federal government pulled out of this program, the minister's department appeared anxious to slap together hastily some sort of rationale that would allow this corporation to go ahead.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, they cooked up this idea that there were all these other groups just lining up to donate money to the government to build roads, and for some reason we needed a whole new agency to collect that money. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier or the Minister of Highways would have presented this Bill to the SARM delegates yesterday, he would have been scoffed at and laughed out of the hall, because we already have a program in place.

SARM knows what rationale they use in building roads. They know what the Department of Highways' rationale is. They would begin to ask what is the reason for another Crown corporation.

If I'm not mistaken there already is a system in place to collect money for building roads. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's called taxes, and everyone in this province knows how familiar the members opposite are with that concept.

In fact every time we look around us we see, well on one hand the Minister of Finance says no, no new taxes, the people of Saskatchewan are telling us they are being taxed to death. Every time they turn around they find another form of taxation that is hitting them direct in the pocketbook, such as we've seen with increases in SaskTel rates, such as we're seeing with increasing SaskPower rates and SaskEnergy rates to the point that we have Crown corporations bringing in millions of dollars in profits and the people of Saskatchewan doling it out, and where is the money disappearing?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, this government has yet to show this House that there really are all these groups anxious to contribute to road building. And the member from Lloydminster is hollering from her seat telling us that we know where the money should be going and where it should be spent.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that we don't have the time to get into the real debate as to the total deficit. But again here, Mr. Speaker, there are many areas and many questions that should be raised. And if the members are so concerned about

deficit reduction, then why are they even bringing forward a Bill that entertains the notion of bringing forward and creating another Crown corporation that becomes a cost to the taxpayers and doesn't do anything to address the debt.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the government has yet to show this House that there really are all these groups anxious to contribute to road building. Even if they did exist, the government has failed to explain why exactly they need an entirely separate agency to make funding arrangements with these groups. Don't government ministers in their own right enter into contracts and deals with groups and businesses around the province all the time? And I believe over the last few weeks we've been hearing of different projects and investment opportunities and employment opportunities that this government has entered into.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's quite obvious that they do enter into arrangements with other groups, and they don't need another corporation. The only thing this Bill and this corporation does is, I believe, waste money. It wastes money not only in establishing the Crown, renting office space and so forth, but it also of course wastes money with the ongoing costs of board members and other staff of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but wonder, as other members have, that this may in fact be the entire rationale for this corporation. What does it do? It creates six new board positions. And I wonder who those positions would be for? Would they be for just the average person, the taxpayer across this province? Or are they indeed going to be just six new positions that the NDP will fill with their own political people, their own . . . just another patronage position for this government to present or to fill with their own faithful members who have supported them through the years.

I know the Premier likes to point out how a lot of people are NDP supporters because so many voted for them. But, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't mean you have to try to invent patronage positions for all of them.

This is kind of an inflationary fiscal policy; if you need more money, print some more. If you run out of board positions for your party faithful, just cook up more positions by inventing another do-nothing Crown corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the minister practically said as much right here in the House. To quote from his second reading speech: the corporation will mean direct economic benefits to Saskatchewan with new jobs.

(1445)

Since, as we have already seen, Mr. Speaker, this corporation does nothing that the Department of Highways isn't already, obviously the minister must be talking about the board positions he is creating. If the government wants to deny that this Crown was kept around only for its patronage value, then I defy the government to explain its reason for being.

This agency represents the very worst kind of government waste, duplication and red tape the government claims that it is opposed to, and we hear about that on a daily basis. The citizens of this province do not need two departments of Highways. They do not need two sets of Highways bureaucrats to give them the run around when they have a complaint or a concern. They do not need to be run around to two different offices when they want to see a road built or repaired. In fact, Mr. Speaker, people just want to deal directly with an individual who has the responsibility to make those decisions.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that individual and that responsibility is with the Minister of Highways, and I don't believe we need another Crown corporation for the Minister of Highways to have to try and work through or the red tape before people indeed get to his bureaucrats in his office. Can the minister tell me honestly that this will not happen if this Bill is passed?

Already, Mr. Speaker, when people look to the government on economic development matters, they have to find their way through a maze of SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation), SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), the Department of Economic Development, the new trade Authority, initiatives through the Department of Agriculture, direct participation of the Crown Investment Corporation, and so on and so on. It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that that is already a large enough maze, we don't need to add anything more to it.

It is unlikely that any one person in the bureaucracy will be able to tell an interested businessman what all programs and initiatives he is eligible for, and I already run into that problem, Mr. Speaker. When you're looking for information on programs that are out there, most people are not able to, in the departments, are not able to give me a direct answer without going and doing some research to see what is available. So I believe that's just another problem that may arise because of this piece of legislation and this creation of this new Crown.

If we allow the government to pass this legislation, the simple democratic act of voicing concerns about the roads could become just as complicated. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another motive for the governments, find new ways to pass the buck long enough to confuse the populace into complacency. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty cheap tactic on the government's part and I can promise that it will not work.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the populace in general are seeing through many of the initiatives and many of the problems and the programs that the government is putting in front of them that just complicate the process of dealing with government and dealing with departments and in fact, dealing with ministers.

One final observation about this Bill I would like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, is this: I expect that this Crown, like most others, will have a union-only tendering policy. Now we've already had debate in this Assembly regarding that policy. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, before this session is over we will have more

debate. And, Mr. Speaker, it's being brought to our attention on a daily basis that many people are very concerned with The Labour Standards Act and the regulations that are being brought forward on a daily basis.

In light, Mr. Speaker, of the recent CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) tendering policy announcement, this possibility becomes even more disturbing. Apparently it wasn't enough for the unions to get 75 per cent of the jobs related to Crown construction. Now they will also get 100 per cent of the jobs relating to highways construction. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, when the government talks about new partnerships with the private sector through this Bill or when the minister talks about new partnerships with the private sector through this Bill, he is talking about the labour end of the private sector, the unionized employees throughout this province.

To repeat, Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely and positively no reason for this Bill to be before this House. Its original rationale has disappeared. The new rationale is clearly a sham, and this Bill will do nothing that it claims it will do. Far from saving money, Mr. Speaker, it will cost taxpayers more. Far from taking away from the debt, it will add to the debt. Far from encouraging road construction, it will confuse and complicate it.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill does nothing but expand the minister's little empire, create some board positions, and duplicates the work of other departments. I would therefore call on the minister to withdraw the Bill. I would call on the Government House Leader to withdraw this Bill, pull it from the Table, and let's get on with useful legislation that is here before the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, because of the number of the concerns I have raised, because of the number of the questions we have with the Bill, and because our opposition is preparing some amendments to this Bill and we need some time to confer with the Law Clerk and legal counsel regarding some of the amendments so that they are appropriate and we'd be able to apply them fairly and honestly, I believe it's very important that we take a moment to sit back and review the Bill. And therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 8

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski that **Bill No. 8 — An Act to repeal The NewGrade Energy Inc. Protection Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to say a few things about the Bill No. 8, an Act to repeal the NewGrade Energy Protection Act.

The essence of my comments, Mr. Speaker, will be that Bill 90 should have never been introduced and passed, and now they're

bringing in an Act to repeal Bill 90. And in part, it has to do with the . . . now become the degree of arrogance of the NDP administration.

From its beginning, in terms of its recent term, it seems like the NDP's approach is to take whatever credit they can for economic projects that were started or initiated by somebody else. They have attempted to launder some projects, gone through an awful lot of political gyrations to make them look a little bit different than when they took them on, and what they've done is caused a great deal of resentment in the business community. And it's not unlike, Mr. Speaker, the problems they faced when they came in here in the 1970s and nationalized industries. And it really upset an awful lot of the investment community.

And today as you look back on the nationalization of those industries, it was a terrible mistake. It was a costly mistake not only in terms of economics and finances for the province of Saskatchewan, but the bigger mistake was associated with the fact that people didn't trust the governments of Saskatchewan, particularly the NDP, so they wouldn't invest in Saskatchewan.

So we saw investments in other jurisdictions. And despite all its efforts, the NDP government of the 1970s couldn't get investments to come in here. They couldn't build upgraders, for example; they couldn't build fertilizer plants; they couldn't build paper mills; they couldn't build pulp mills; they couldn't build combinations of packing plants. It just wasn't on. And in good part — and we know now because we've seen the flip-flop of the NDP recently — is that because of the terribly bad taste they left in business people's mouths about investing in Saskatchewan. Well don't invest there because the NDP might win and they might nationalize you.

But as a result, even the local co-ops wouldn't invest to a large extent, or the Wheat Pools or others, because of this fear. You're better to put your money some place else. So we saw fertilizer plants expanding in other jurisdictions. We saw other economic activity taking place where the raw materials would go out of Saskatchewan into the U.S. (United States) or into Alberta. We'd process the goods, bring it back here. The kids would leave, go to work in Alberta, go to work in the United States. And so we exported children, we exported raw commodities, and we imported the value added commodity.

Well we learned that lesson, and the public of Saskatchewan learned that lesson, and the NDP is beginning to learn it. But the difficult part for Saskatchewan people is as the NDP learn it, they have to go through these gyrations of trying to pretend it's something else. And that's what we see here with Bill 8.

They brought in Bill 90 and they passed it so in fact they could have a hammer over the heads of Federated Co-op, and that's not fair. It's not good business, it's not honest, it doesn't deal with people with integrity. The refinery has been there for years and years and there's a big advantage to building an upgrader with a refinery and with Saskatchewan people, as opposed to anybody else.

They could never get it done themselves, so once it's done and once it's finished, they have to go bring in this very difficult, quite frankly ugly legislation and impose it on co-op members in the province of Saskatchewan, and put them through this terrible period. Because what happened? The co-op members and the Conservative government together cooperated with the federal government to build Canada's first upgrader.

And it was interesting; we did it in downtown Regina, beside a refinery that saves \$700 million if you're going to build an upgrader anyway. So it's the logical place to put it. And the NDP could never get it done with the co-op and they do record in history that it was responsible in part for their loss of the '86 election.

And now, after they got back into power in '91, they said oh, we got to redo this. And we're not going to sit down and negotiate honourably at the table; we're going to force it through like they did with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program); like they've done with Saskatchewan Pension; as they've done with judges; as they've done with others. We'll just be as arrogant as we can be and just run roughshod over people's views and the reputation of the province of Saskatchewan.

And it's perfectly consistent with the nationalization, Mr. Speaker. They had no hesitation in defending nationalization here which you would just take over businesses. And what do we see here with this Bill? This Bill is finally backing up and saying, well we really didn't need to do that.

But they did it. They did it. And the consequences of this, and we'll see in other projects, is that it leaves a terribly bad taste in the mouths of people, and the co-op members resent it today. They're extremely upset with this. They said we can sit down and negotiate. This was a good deal for the people of Saskatchewan.

I just want to touch on a combination of reasons why it is such a good deal for the people of Saskatchewan. First of all, the people of our province saved in the neighbourhood of \$700 million building an upgrader in Saskatchewan tied to an existing refinery. Now we have one refinery in the province of Saskatchewan that processes heavy oil into gasoline and diesel fuel, and that's the refinery here. Built years and years ago by grass roots people and co-op movement so that we could have some power over the energy business. And if we put an upgrader with that refinery, we automatically save \$700 million. Now that's already here.

Secondly, it helps support that refinery, which is an economic ace for the province of Saskatchewan. It shores up that refinery. It gives it work to do. It provides it with a source of synthetic crude so that we can make our own gasoline and diesel fuel, and don't rely on Alberta or other jurisdictions.

Co-op members knew that; we knew that. But for whatever reason, the NDP couldn't get it done. And once it is done, they seemed to miss that point and they completely overlooked it.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, that upgrader takes 50,000 barrels a day of heavy crude and medium crude and it processes it. That's 50,000 barrels a day out of the ground in Saskatchewan that wouldn't have a market here. We would be subject or vulnerable to coke industries or United States heavy oil market which has much less profit in it for us, and certainly at times, than using synthetic crude.

In other words, we have much more market power over 50,000 barrels a day if we have an upgrader in place. And the NDP just didn't seem to understand that. That 50,000 barrels a day, plus an additional upgrader — I might add that's 50,000 barrels a day -- generates something like 25 million barrels a year that is now coming out of the ground in the province of Saskatchewan and going through upgraders which are profitable.

(1500)

The Bi-Provincial upgrader is profitable and the refinery here is profitable and the oil patch is profitable and the jobs there and the royalties are profitable. In other words, the Minister of Finance stood here the other day and said, the two upgraders contribute in the neighbourhood of \$100 million a year value added to the province of Saskatchewan. And that information came from his deputy who was sitting beside him.

And the NDP came into power and they say, well we'll have to bring in Bill 90 which means that we can just take over the upgrader. Well it's a terrible legacy and attitude to leave to the people of Saskatchewan for the rest of the country to look at.

Mr. Speaker, 50,000 barrels a day can generate something like \$35 million a year or nearly \$100,000 a day directly — directly — to the Consolidated Fund. That kind of money comes from building an upgrader in Saskatchewan with the co-op movement, next to a refinery that is profitable — and very profitable.

On top of this, Mr. Speaker, we see the fact that the economic activity associated with building an upgrader here has spin-offs in relation to education. And the education and the timing and the learning and the research associated with upgrading is extremely important. No place in Canada will we find more information being learned about upgrading and running an upgrader than right here in the city of Regina with the upgrader that we have here — NewGrade upgrader.

Mr. Speaker, the interesting point is that if you go back and try to find out if the NDP had calculated any of these benefits, there is no evidence of that. The benefits of refining; the benefits of the jobs associated with building an upgrader; the benefits of supplying 50,000 barrels of oil to the refinery, the upgrader, and then to the refinery, the benefits of the royalty structure that comes into the province of Saskatchewan. Because if we look at something like 25 million barrels a day . . . a year, pardon me . . . that are coming into the province as a result of upgraders, there is tremendous benefit to the province of Saskatchewan, way more than the losses associated in starting up a brand-new upgrader.

And there are losses in starting it up. And there were losses in the Bi-Provincial upgrader in starting it up. And there are losses starting up a packing plant and all kinds of other businesses.

But there's nowhere do we see documented evidence where the NDP has even taken it into consideration. They brought in Bill 90 that said these other things don't count. We will run roughshod over the co-op members, roughshod over the co-op movement. They threatened co-op members. They disregarded their feelings. They disregarded contracts. They disregarded the opposition. They voted in this legislature, come hell or high water, to make sure that they would have the capacity to completely run and control the NewGrade upgrader.

And as a result, we saw a terrible taste left in the mouths of people who worked very hard to build the upgrader. And secondly, no recognition of the contribution that the co-op movement had made, and the Government of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan, in building Canada's first upgrader here in the province of Saskatchewan . . . in terms of royalties, in terms of jobs, in terms of value added, in terms of strengthening the refinery, strengthening the co-op movement — none of them.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I say this goes right back to the very arrogant attitude of nationalizing companies. It's like the NDP never get over that. They have to have that arrogant attitude that says we will retroactively change legislation. We will retroactively break contracts. We will retroactively not invite you in here. We will take over companies.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they failed to negotiate. They took heavy-handed tactics and condemned the co-op, condemned the previous government that put the package together, said it was the worst deal ever. And we know that's not the case.

The co-op members in good faith built the upgrader. And the people of Saskatchewan and the previous government in good faith built the upgrader. And the Government of Canada contributed to build that upgrader. And now we have two of the most valuable upgrading capacities anywhere in Canada, the two newest. The finest pieces of research are going to have ongoing laboratories to understand how upgrading works and contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the coffers of the people of Saskatchewan well above the costs — well above the costs. And that's well known now.

And so we see Bill No. 8 saying they're going to back away from that Draconian measure of taking over the co-op movement as far as the upgrader capacity is concerned. And I find it very unfortunate and frankly somewhat pathetic that they'd have to be that Draconian in dealing with the co-op movement in the province of Saskatchewan.

They passed Bill 90 to give them control over the upgrader. They didn't proclaim it, but they passed it. They held it over the FCL's (Federated Co-operatives Ltd.) head like a big club and then invited them back to the bargaining table, just like they did the potash industry when they nationalized it.

The deal was signed and arrangements have been made to deal with the debt problems of the project, and under duress, people made decisions. What is not positive is the method by which this deal was struck. It's reminiscent of other deals done in this legislature that I wouldn't endorse, and I certainly can give you lots of evidence, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP wouldn't endorse when they were in opposition. They wouldn't endorse retroactive legislation. They wouldn't endorse high-handed activities like that. They said the government has no mandate to do that. The government had no mandate to offer shares in things like Energy.

So how would you have the mandate to retroactively change deals, take over deals, and do that? You were not elected to do that. But once you're in power, typically the NDP go back and they respond the same way — nationalize the industry, take it over, bully them about, bring in legislation. It doesn't matter what the opposition says. Just make sure that the high-handed nature of the NDP is apparent. Well if anyone stands in the NDP's way, you just pull out the big club and say, nationalize, take over, just like Bill 90.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the NDP should spend a lot of time thinking about Bill 8. Bill 8 is an admission that they were wrong. Bill 8 is like saying, which was better for the potash industry — nationalizing it or privatizing it?

And the whole world now knows that privatizing the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan has made eminent economic sense. Shares have gone from \$18 to almost \$60 a share. Tremendous. And the people of Saskatchewan had every option to participate. The Government of Saskatchewan has made money. The people are making money. It's a worldwide corporation. It's doubled in size — no question.

And now the NDP says, we favour privatization. They're encouraging the privatization of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. They are now going to be in favour of privatization. They're going to be in favour of — what is it next, Mr. Speaker? — multinationals.

They should have a Bill here associated with Bill 8 that repeals all their old sayings. They're in favour of free trade. Maybe they should have a Bill that says, we now repent on free trade; we believe that free trade is a good idea all over the world.

They now believe evidently, Mr. Speaker, in harmonization. In fact they'll even do better than harmonization. Rather than harmonize with Cargill, they'll even give them money outright to match the harmonized amount. That's what it is — harmonization with the PST (provincial sales tax). You can take that back. If you manufacture and process in Saskatchewan, you can get it back. They should have a Bill here to repeal all of their sayings about harmonization.

And they need a Bill to repent with respect to privatization. Because they've introduced a Bill here to privatize the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Now if I had initiated that, it would have been just terrible; or if anybody else on this side of the

House had done it, it would have been terrible. But if the NDP want to do it, it's okay.

Well I just want to point out that Bill 8 is typical of what the NDP are going through. They have to squirm through it and they have to wiggle their way around it and they have to back out of it. But we see over and over again that when it comes to reality, they're finally facing the music. Free trade's a good idea. Harmonization's a good idea. Megaprojects that were announced today, Mr. Speaker . . . Isn't a \$250 million uranium project kind of a megaproject? It's kind of big, and they were against that.

And today they should have a Bill here saying, oh it's okay. Megaprojects are okay. Here's Bill no 8(b) and 8(c) and 8(d) and 8(e). We've changed our minds.

They're for multinationals; Cargill is okay. Imagine writing a huge, privately owned company — this is a socialist doing this — a cheque for \$4 million cash. How does that go over in some of your more partisan local meetings? Cargill gets \$4 million of the taxpayers' money right in their pocket if they'll just build a canola plant here.

I mean isn't this unbelievable that NDPers and socialists and the CCFers (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) would be taking taxpayers' money and saying, well we're going to give it to Cargill, a multinational. Unbelievable. I mean you should have a Bill in here that repents and says it's okay to do this now.

And you're in favour of oil companies. My gosh, we can invite oil companies in. I think it's fair to say that Tommy Douglas, Allan Blakeney, and many, many other NDP, let alone leaders, beat on oil companies for years, and now it's okay. Come on in.

Well, and particularly with respect to uranium, it's unbelievable that not so long ago we couldn't even have the NDP in favour of mining and now they're even encouraging the Atomic Energy Corporation of Canada, after we brought it in here, to cooperate and to build and to do research.

Well that isn't really to mention them all, but if you look at the combination of things that the NDP are trying to take credit for, the combinations of things that they're repenting on, what you have here is a typical example in Bill 8. And I would just like to say that there was no reason for Bill 8. There's no reason for Bill 90. I guess that's why we have to have Bill 8, but Bill 8 shouldn't be seen in isolation.

Bill No. 8 is an admission by the NDP that they made all kinds of mistakes over the past 25 or 40 years, not encouraging people to invest in the province of Saskatchewan. And retroactive legislation, retroactive legislation, Mr. Speaker, that takes away the power of arrangements and signed contracts is just unacceptable today. It leaves a bad taste in people's mouths and I criticize, honestly criticize, the NDP for Bill 90 and for coming forward . . . having to come forward with something that repealed it because they never even had the courage to proclaim it. And thank goodness, thank goodness, because on

so many other things they've had to change their mind. And, Mr. Speaker, I would stand the Bill because I think that maybe some other people who would like to speak on it.

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

Bill No. 6

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cunningham that **Bill No. 6 — An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to, at the end of my remarks, have this Bill move into the committee stage. Just for the record I think there's some things that the minister should be aware of on this particular Bill that we will be asking questions about in committee because I think they are pertinent.

We've already identified in earlier speeches, that by taking away the order in council provisions and funding of Crop Insurance and allowing the minister to move money directly out of the Department of Agriculture, that I honestly believe that there will be less accountability because the ability of members of the House to follow the flow of money during the course of the budget year will be hampered that way.

On the other hand, I suspect that the provisions will allow the department or the Crop Insurance Corporation to settle producer accounts quicker than they have in the past. Because when they had to wait for order in councils to come through, oftentimes producers — particularly in the area of wildlife damage — sometimes waited months before they had the opportunity to get their bill settled up.

As I said in my earlier comments, the minister should be prepared to answer questions vis-a-vis the board of directors. We have 12 individuals that are paid per diems to sit on the board of directors of Crop Insurance, and it seems now that their input into the monetary decisions of Crop Insurance will not matter much because the minister can simply do whatever he wishes out of department land.

(1515)

And the final issue that I think needs to be addressed in committee is that once this initiative takes place, it would be much easier for the government to move the Crop Insurance Corporation out of Melville, Saskatchewan, back into Regina; that they would not have to have all of those employees in Melville. That by the minister being able to redirect funding, they could easily change the location of that particular Crop Insurance Corporation. And then we would see the minister's ability with his funding being changed to begin, for instance, placing a lot of his political friends more easily into the Crop Insurance Corporation.

So those are all issues that will have to be addressed in committee, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's the appropriate place to do it. So I would move that we go there now.

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

Bill No. 7

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cunningham that **Bill No. 7 — An Act to amend The Apiaries Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also with this particular Bill, the information that's coming back from the various interest groups associated with both honey- and leafcutter bee production in the province, I think those questions can now be posed to the minister in committee stage, and I believe that's the appropriate place to handle it.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

The Chair: — Before we proceed with item 1, perhaps we might ask the minister to re-introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my right is Con Hnatiuk, the deputy minister of Social Services. Behind Con, Neil Yeates, our associate deputy minister. Directly behind me, Bob Wihlidal, the director of budget branch, and Phil Walsh, our director of income security.

Item 1

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and officials. I first of all would like to visit with you about the Bill 33.

Mr. Minister, on March 8 the official opposition introduced a very important Bill called An Act respecting the Donation of Food. And before introducing this legislation, Mr. Minister, our office spoke to several members of the food industry including hotels and caterers, feeding programs and facilities like the Regina food bank and the Saskatchewan food bank, Chili for Children, REACH (Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger Inc.), and many others. And all were very supportive and excited about this good Samaritan legislation.

Will your government be supporting this Bill, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much for that question. I think as I've tried to indicate to the hon. member is that we

appreciate the — very much — the idea. We have reviewed the Bill. In fact we look favourably upon it; we intend, I believe, to support it.

We are looking at the . . . we've been looking at the fact that that Bill will provide protection from a civil point of view, but there are also some public health . . . We're reviewing it from the point of view of The Public Health Act — is also an Act in which there could be some liabilities.

But we have checked as well with the food banks, and I know you appreciate that we — it's not that we didn't trust your judgement — we have to do that as well and got a favourable response. And we've also been in touch with other provinces and it's helped in some provinces more than others.

But certainly overall I think we feel positive about the Bill. And I think the important thing is of course we need to continue with strategies that deal with the medium- and long-term solutions, the causes of poverty, which I think are important to address simultaneously. And we believe we're doing that.

But with regard to the Bill itself, at this point we're looking very favourably upon it and I think in the next two or three days we'll be in a position to hopefully move that along.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I appreciate the fact that you are taking a closer look at the legislation; however, I believe that time is of an essence. I'd like to bring your attention at an article at the beginning of March, and that states: Saskatoon food bank is down to its last crumbs. Down to only one day's food supply, Mr. Minister. Hungry families need food and members of the food industry are ready and willing to get into this program. And all this has to happen; all you have to do, Mr. Minister, is help us pass this Bill, a speedy passage of Bill 33.

The Bill was patterned after legislation already in effect in five other provinces, and as a matter of fact, Mr. Minister, in 50 states; this Bill was patterned after other Bills that are working. In fact, Mr. Minister, Bill 33 is worded exactly like Bill 170, which is an Act respecting the donation of food passed in Ontario, passed by the Ontario legislation last June. Not a word has been changed; not a word has been deleted from the Ontario Bill. And I have a copy — I'm sure you have too — but I have a copy, if you don't, of the legislation if you'd like to have one.

The success of this legislation in the province of Ontario, Mr. Minister, has been overwhelming. It's working well. And I don't like to sound unsympathetic but, Mr. Minister, you've already seen the positive effects of this Bill. We've provided you the statistics two weeks ago.

Given all these facts, Mr. Minister, what possible objections can you have to passing this Bill now?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well sorry, I maybe didn't make myself clear. What I was trying to say is that we're just clarifying to make sure that it's consistent with The Public Health Act in

Saskatchewan. I appreciate what you're saying about the Bill as directly lifted from Ontario, but their public health Act may not be the same as ours.

And so we're just trying to . . . if we can strengthen it fine, but we don't see holding it up. And as I tried to say, in the next day or two I'm hoping that I could be in a position to . . . And you'll be the first to know. I'll come and see you to try and move this along. So I'm not sure what else to say.

But again, we appreciate the fact that you have come forth with an idea rather than just being critical. And that's refreshing relative to just criticism we're getting from your colleagues to your left there.

Mr. Britton: — Well, Mr. Minister, I pointed out to you that the Saskatoon food bank is down to their last crumbs. So when you say a day or two, that's a long time if you're hungry. And I'm not so sure it should take a day or two to check out the food Act.

I want to quote to you a letter, quote from a letter, Mr. Minister. And this is a letter written to Mr. Dalton McGuinty. And he's the MPP (Member of the Provincial Parliament) from Queen's Park responsible for the good Samaritan legislation in Ontario.

And the letter is from Second Harvest food recovery program in Ontario. And it states, I quote:

Since June, when your Bill, The Donation of Food Act, became law in Ontario, Second Harvest has seen a significant increase in interest and support from potential food donors. Having the good Samaritan legislation in place strengthens our position when soliciting for donations and removes any concern of a liability issue.

We will be picking up food of a higher nutritional quality as well as seeing an increase in the quantity donated. It would be great to see good Samaritan legislation implemented country-wide.

For the record, another letter from the food bank in Ontario . . . Ottawa, pardon me, states:

Through good Samaritan legislation, we have now acquired a supply of liquid milk that was previously not available. We have also been contacted by Hershey Canada and have already received seven pallets of food, due directly to this law.

In addition, our prepared and perishable food retrievable program, city harvest, has grown dramatically.

I would like to thank you once again for the work you put into this legislation. It has, and will, continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people throughout Ontario who must rely on food banks every month.

Mr. Minister, we have many, many more letters just like this one. And I would like to see all three parties, all three parties stand in the House here and support this Bill. They did that in Ontario, and I'm sure we can do that here. We have at different times supported things that we all agree is beneficial.

Could you please offer a specific date, very soon, that you will let this legislation go through the House? And remember, two or three days is a long time if you're hungry.

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm encouraged to see the member from Wilkie, who spent nine and a half years in government, a government that didn't even acknowledge until 1990 when your minister of Family . . . in fact in 1990 he said poverty didn't exist, that the reason that kids are not eating is because their parents don't spend enough time going for a walk with them around Wascana river or Wascana Creek here. So finally he acknowledged about 1991 that poverty existed.

If you're so interested in the poverty issue, it baffles me as to why you didn't support the child development and nutrition programs. You voted against that last year, and I fully contend you'll vote against that this year out of the child action plan, as did the Liberals. That's an initiative out of the child action plan, \$1 million for school lunch programs, 47 programs, I believe, around the province. You voted against that.

A couple of days ago in this House, the Liberals ducked out because they didn't have the courage to stand up for working people. And this is the hypocrisy of your position, so at least be consistent. Your leader wanted to reverse the decision of a Bill that would give part-time benefits to part-time working people. I can tell you that 25, 26, 27 per cent of the people on social assistance today are working. They're not getting enough to live on.

And then one day you get up, and you try and bring in a Bill that will take away part-time benefits for part-time employees. And then the next day you get up and say, can't you speed up the Bill to deal with hungry children; two or three days is a long time. And then you vote against the child action plan which gives . . .

We provide all kinds of supports. I spent an hour and a half at the Regina food bank last Thursday with Mr. Bloos and the board, and we went over the potential for building in additional services there to support people, give people the tools so that they don't have to rely on the food bank. So we're trying to find ways to empower people to lift themselves out of poverty, and we need your support.

Now we've also checked with other provinces, and we know that that's made a difference in some provinces. It hasn't made a big difference in other provinces. And if it makes any difference, that's great. But don't think that by bringing this Bill in that that is your contribution to charity — which is what it is — that is your contribution to dealing with poverty in

Saskatchewan.

Poverty worsened in the 1980s. We didn't have one food bank when you came to power. When you left power, we had 10 food banks. Think about that. Because you didn't provide funding to social programs, to income security programs . . .

An Hon. Member: — You've got 80,000 on welfare.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well the member from . . . my good friend from Morse says 80,000 on welfare. Well I ask you to consider why there are increased numbers of people on welfare. Are you denying the fact . . .

An Hon. Member: — No jobs.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Could I ask you, what do you mean no jobs? Are you denying the fact — you're an objective, fair person — are you denying the fact that the treaty Indian offload has cost this province \$41 million this year in new money? Are you denying that? That's an offload, the federal offload.

The UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) cuts from the federal Liberals last February, where the federal Liberals cut benefits to unemployed people on UIC, cut benefits by seven weeks. All claims north of Davidson — seven weeks they cut benefits. That cost us \$17 million this year. And then the federal Liberals froze the Canada Assistance Plan on us, so they're not even reimbursing us 50 per cent on those offloads.

So if you're going to say 80,000 people, beneficiaries, you've got to be fair about it. Because we can document the numbers that contributed to that. We didn't play the games like your Alberta counterparts did. We didn't drive 7,000 people to other provinces by reducing benefits. We didn't drive 12,000 families back to reserves where there was poor housing, fewer educational opportunities, and no jobs. We didn't do that. And we also didn't transfer 10,000 clients over to another dependency program and then brag about the welfare rates being low.

But even when you take what Alberta's done and you take our total case-load and dependency rate, at 7.8 or 9 per cent it's the second lowest in Canada. It's not good enough, but it's the second lowest in Canada.

And you can't credibly say — you and your Liberal friend — you can't credibly say, create some jobs. There's been about 1,500 jobs announced in the last week alone. And if you're going to be fair, you'll have to acknowledge — if you're going to be fair about it, because you get the monthly bulletin of the social assistance case-load numbers — that from, say, May of 1994 to the end of January 1995 the case-load reduction was about 1,300 clients, or 27, 2,800 beneficiaries, even in the face of the offloads.

So we're making progress despite the federal offloads. And you wait till next year and the year after. And I hope when our friend from Regina North West gets up, she'll be able to tell me,

tell us here, what she said to the Prime Minister yesterday to lessen the impact of . . . you think poverty's high now in Canada, it's nothing like it's going to be — given the absence of a federal job strategy — it's nothing like it's going to be when the federal government offloads another \$120 million to this province.

And by the way, while I'm at it, I can't believe that the Prime Minister of Canada, where we've committed ourselves to eliminating poverty, would boycott the Copenhagen conference, which is an absolute disgrace. But that's what he has done. And basically said that Canada's not concerned about poor people in Canada and of course worldwide.

So I told you at the outset that in the next day or two I would be able to give you a positive indication. I don't know what else I can say. If you're really concerned about poverty, and I know you're a sincere person, please vote for the child development and nutrition program which is in this budget in the child action plan, which this year will be 6.2 million in total? — \$6.2 million, the large bulk of that directed towards unemployed and low income people. If you're really going to be consistent, vote for those kinds of things and not against them.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I was kind of glad to see you finally address the question towards the last of your sermon there. You forget . . . you also forget a few things.

It was your government, when you were in opposition, told us that you were going to eliminate food banks. Now you talk about how many is there there now as compared to when you became government. You were going to eliminate the need. You were going to eliminate poverty.

Mr. Minister, you also talked about welfare people out of work and so on. Well I don't think we're talking about the same group of people. We'll get into the welfare side of it, I suppose, before we're done, but I'm asking you about this Bill. And it don't seem to me like you're interested in fast-tracking this Bill. But your government will fast-track a casino in order to get people stealing from their employers to gamble, but you won't fast-track something that has a bearing on children.

And you talk about food banks and you talk about the great and wonderful things you had done. Let me ask you, let me ask you: if you've done such a great and wonderful job and you criticize me for criticizing you — and I guess that's fair — but why do you have so many people needing the food banks if you're doing such a wonderful job? They shouldn't be there.

Why should there be 83,000 people asking for help if your job creation is as wonderful as you try to pretend it is? The logic is not there. The facts don't add up. And I know you'll tell me what happened in Alberta. You choose to mention Alberta when it's favourable to your story. But when it's not favourable, then you ignore them. They created 83,000 jobs. Now if you'd created 80,000 jobs, you wouldn't have had these people on welfare; you wouldn't have had the need for the food banks.

Now we can suppose and we can talk about things, but the reality is that there are food banks running out of food. And I pointed out to you — I have a couple of the letters that I'm prepared to send over if you don't have them, and I'm sure you do — where people all across this country agree that this is a good Bill. And I don't accept that it's going to take a lot of days to get your assurance on this thing. That's all we're asking. Can we get you to give us a date? Will you tell us when you'll let us put this Bill through the House?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member starts out by saying, look, you're avoiding the question; just speak to the Bill. And then he brings in all kinds of side issues, brings in all kinds of side issues about gaming and Alberta and creating jobs, and so on. But then wants me to confine my remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Chairman, our commitment was and is to eliminate the need for food banks. We continue to make that commitment to you, and to — more importantly, I suppose — to people of Saskatchewan, low income people. But you have to realize too that you have left this province in deep, deep trouble. When we took office — well you smile — when we took office, we had the highest per capita deficit in Canada. The highest per capita deficit in Canada. Now we've turned that around in three and a half years and balanced the budget.

I hope that you at least see that sustaining a balanced budget and getting the financial house in order is something that . . . I know it's not something you were familiar with in your term, but it's something that you would view as being related to improving the economy.

As a result of improving the finances of the province, we've also set out a plan to tackle your debt. It's going to be a long-term proposition, but we've set out to do that as well.

On top of that, the *Partnership for Renewal* is creating jobs at a rate that is nothing less than a miracle. And you know you're not tackling that any more in question period because since StatsCanada revised their figures, you and the Liberals are not even addressing this, because on the jobs issue you don't have any credibility.

You gave away billions and billions of dollars of assets in this province, and then you still left a \$16 billion debt. And then you're not willing to acknowledge the incredible offloads that occurred under the Mulroney government that have continued under the Chrétien government that have an impact on the Saskatchewan budget and our ability or inability to enhance some programs. And we would love to.

Now there were no food banks in this province before you came to power. I know you will acknowledge that. When you left there were 10 food banks, and they were well entrenched because you did not put money into social programs in the 1980s; I know that and you know that. Low income people fell further and further behind. I can tell you that from '91 to '92, we've gone from having . . . the last official stats available, I

think, in Saskatchewan, the number of children in poverty was 21.9. We've actually stayed about the same — not good enough but we stayed about the same. Now that's '93-94. I'm sure the picture when those results come out, we will have done much better.

But in Alberta, the child poverty rate has worsened by 5 per cent, while we've remained the same. Now you like to draw on Alberta selectively, and Alberta has lost ground on the child poverty front. We have moved up. Relative to other provinces, we've moved up two notches. Alberta has now the second highest family poverty rate in Canada. Can you believe that? Alberta has the second highest rate of family poverty in Canada — the model that you believe is the outstanding model, the second highest family poverty rate in Canada, with all of their resources and wealth.

I have here an article from the *Leader-Post* which you would have seen yesterday, and the headline is: "Food banks growing in Alberta." And I quote; it says:

People are turning to Alberta food banks at twice the pace (at twice the pace) as people in other parts of the country, says the former head of a national food bank association.

Someone who has a national sense of what's happening on food banks. And then he goes on to say:

"... the number of people who use the food bank is proportional to the amount of cuts (that have happened) ... at the provincial welfare level."

And then he goes on to say, and I'm just about finished here, he says:

"They're (the people are) looking with great anxiety toward the welfare model that's being brought down in Alberta. They're very anxious that it will catch on, and it's the kind of disease we don't want."

(1545)

So Alberta has the second lowest rate of child poverty in all of Canada and that's a model that you like. They have cut tens of millions of dollars and you admitted yourself — if I understood what you said in your throne speech; I was reading this just yesterday — that you like the way Alberta has tackled the deficit. But 75 per cent of the Alberta deficit has been on the backs of low income people.

And Manitoba alone, another Tory government, cut \$10 million this year alone, cut \$10 million alone this year from shelter aids. That is the Tory approach, which is going to mean that people are going to have to take food money for shelter in Manitoba. So that's what our neighbouring provinces are doing, our two Tory neighbouring provinces are doing.

So we're in a situation where Alberta, the second highest rate of

family poverty in Canada, second only to Newfoundland if you can believe that. And that's the model you like.

Well that's not the model that we accept. And I want to share with you, because I know you get the labour force report, July of 1995, that total employment is up 9,000 over this February over last February — total employment is up 9,000.

Now surely you would acknowledge that those figures are true and that that's a good sign for unemployed, people who aren't working and people who hope to be working. So I would suggest that that didn't happen by accident, that the *Partnership For Renewal* strategy is working.

In fact last night out at a function with the home builders, I talked to 10 or 20 people who made it very clear to me that the fact that the province has got the financial house in order here and has got such a partnership in economic development and has given small business people a tax break, that that bodes well for the economic future of the province. And they're very confident.

Now I mean those are external people saying that. We continue to have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada. I know you would acknowledge that because that's public information. As well from the labour force report in February, you will note that for young people ages 15 to 24 we posted a 6,000-person increase over this time of last year. And the unemployment rate dropped 1.6 points for young people in that category.

Now that's not good enough because there is still unemployed people, but that is progress. And again, I hope if you're really concerned about low income people, as I said before, you and your Liberal friends will support the child action plan which directs more money to hungry children. And also you will support the programs like Future Skills and JobStart which is designed to support young people in becoming employed.

And you will support our day care initiatives. And if the Liberals will give us a little help instead of ducking votes, they will take the opportunity to talk to their federal counterparts about what they believe is going to be the impact, the impact of a hundred ... Well the member from Shaunavon laughs about this but the point is that isn't he concerned? First of all isn't he concerned about the cutting of the Crow or the impact on farmers there? And the impact on all of Saskatchewan, I might say. He's laughing about this.

And secondly, isn't he concerned as a Saskatchewan citizen, and isn't he concerned about 115 ... \$20 million dollar cut, as he smiles, to the health, education, and social services, of federal offload? I mean isn't he concerned about that? That'll have devastating consequences for this province. And you know, at least if he's not going to stick up for Saskatchewan and Ralph Goodale is not going to stick up for Saskatchewan, at least Warren Allmand is sticking up for people you purport to be concerned about today.

And Allmand says, and I quote from yesterday's *Leader-Post* I believe, he says that he will not: "back a budget that breaks election promises and betrays party traditions . . ." That's what he's saying about the Liberal, the federal Liberal budget that's going to offload another \$120 million onto this province.

Now I would doubt very much if the member from Shaunavon or Regina North West talked to the Prime Minister last night about the impact of those offloads to the province of Saskatchewan. But at least Warren Allmand is doing that. And he goes on to say further, he says topping the list of his dislikes is "slashing funding to provinces". He's sticking up for provinces; why don't you from Shaunavon, Mr. Member?

And he says: "slashing funding to provinces for higher education, welfare and health care and roll(ing) all the money into a single block . . ." And he says: "When that bill comes before us, I'll be voting against that."

At least Warren Allmand is sticking up for the provinces; I don't know why the member from Shaunavon and the member from Regina North West aren't, as they sit there laughing from their seats. This is not a funny issue.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize. My attention was diverted. Well thank you, Mr. Minister. You were talking about side issues. Well you sure . . . if that wasn't going into a lot of side issues, I've never seen it. I'll try to be more specific. The question I asked was what were you going to do about Bill 33. And I can't remember elaborating too much on that except to suggest to you that it's been accepted in many other places.

Now you went into the debt, which seems to be a favourite backup. You don't remember to tell the folks that you left \$6 billion yourself when we took over government in '81, that there was \$6 billion in the Crowns. That was yours, but you don't tell it. So all the debt has to be Grant Devine's, the Devine government, which is fine.

You talk about jobs. Well, Mr. Minister, if you do have any new jobs since last January, where else is there to go? You can't go anywhere but up. You've chased everybody out of the province that wants to work because there isn't any. So naturally your unemployment figures are low because there's nobody left but old folks and people that don't want to work which you put on to welfare.

You talked about . . . you also got into Alberta, and you talked about how they balanced the budget. Well I can tell you, sir, in Saskatchewan when you balanced the budget, you laid on \$4,800 a year on a family of four. That sure didn't happen in Alberta.

Mr. Minister, I fear of asking you another question because I'm not too sure where you'll get to in the rest of the afternoon. However I'm going to defer to the member of the third party who wants to ask you a few questions, and she has another commitment, so I will defer to her for now, and you and I can

visit later.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'd like a brief response. Just a very, very brief response just to say that I don't know what else to say to the member. I said that in the next day or two I'd get back to you. That's a direct answer to your question, but I can't let two things go past.

Get the notion out of your head that people are still leaving Saskatchewan because that is not true. People are not leaving Saskatchewan. Look at the last six, seven quarters. People are moving in. So I mean get that straight at least and don't perpetuate that. People left in the '80s. As has been said in this House, I think by the Minister of Health yesterday, this is the '90s now and all kinds of things have changed.

Secondly, you say about Saskatchewan . . . I hope you read tomorrow what you said. You said that there's nothing left to Saskatchewan except old folks, people who don't want to work, and those on welfare. Is that your assessment of what's left in Saskatchewan?

That's about it. You offend, you offend the 445,000 people who are working in Saskatchewan when you say things like that. And you should be ashamed of yourself. You're saying all that's left of Saskatchewan is old folks, those who don't want to work, and welfare people. And I mean I'm very sad to hear you say that and I hope you didn't mean it that way.

But to answer your question, the next day or two, I told you I'd get back and you'll be the first to know.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Mr. Minister, to your officials on behalf of the third party caucus.

Mr. Minister, when government departments began the process of budget preparation last fall, you must have had some direction from the Department of Finance on how to go about planning your budgets for this year. Could you tell me, please, what those directions from the Department of Finance were, including what the spending areas were that you were instructed to look for spending cuts or efficiencies?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well first of all, let me say that I welcome the question from the hon. member.

First of all, let me say that we did not have any directions from the Department of Finance to say here's your cuts and then you make your decisions. That's not how the budgeting process works.

We go to the Department of Finance and my colleagues here with a plan as to how we can support low income people, how we can strengthen the services for those who are the most vulnerable, and how we can partnership with communities to make sure that the infrastructure of income security and the links with education and training and skills development programs and health care . . . those are all interrelated. And one of our major strategies — which incidentally you continue to

vote against — is the child action plan.

And we go in an integrated fashion like that. And then we negotiate around . . . I can tell you that my budget isn't cut this year. Well you would know that from reading the budget. So unlike the federal Liberals, where Mr. Axworthy can't negotiate . . . he can negotiate with me one day but not the next, and we reached some agreements one day and not the next. He doesn't know where he stands because he doesn't know what his budget cuts are; we don't plan that way.

We take forth a plan which we believe is comprehensive, and then we negotiate around that, and that's how we did our budget planning based on a set of priorities. And we're very proud of the fact that we're continuing to balance the budget in this province and develop a debt reduction plan, and that we've also been able to marginally, marginally enhance supports for low income working people and people who aren't able to work.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your answer, Mr. Minister. In speaking about the federal government, I wondered if you would please table the federal-provincial funding agreements that you have signed in the past year, or agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I wonder if you could clarify what agreements you're talking about, please.

Mrs. Bergman: — The question I'm asking is: how much money comes from the federal government that goes into your department?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, that's approximately 43 per cent of all the departmental expenditures come from the federal government, which I might add continues to shrink. But this year it will be approximately 40 per cent, 43 per cent.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could you tell me what areas that 43 per cent — and the amount that the 43 per cent is — what areas that money is spent in?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes. That money goes . . . About 200 million goes towards social assistance, child welfare services, community living for persons with disabilities, and some grants to some non-government organizations.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could I have a detailed listing of the amounts that go to those various programs?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we'll compile that and send it over to you when it's available, if that's okay. For this year, this current year. Okay.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, have you initiated any new suggestions or program applications to the federal government? And if so, what are they?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we've had discussions with the federal government with regard to the need and desirability for child care improvements or child care. And from the federal perspective, of course, the promise is in the red book on child care.

Secondly, we've had discussions with the federal government and with our provincial counterparts about maintaining an important federal role in the national standards of social programs.

Thirdly, we've had discussions — very detailed discussions — with them with regard to the redesigning of the social welfare system, the social network, if you will, to ensure that there are supports for . . . employment supports for low income people. And we were a little more optimistic in the past than we are now that in fact there will be the ability to continue to some fruitful conclusion here.

We're hopeful. We're going to continue to press to do that. But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that if you're going to cut \$120 million from this social envelope, that this is going to be problematic, to put it mildly, for not only Saskatchewan but for many other provinces.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, you just mentioned that you had renewed optimism. On what basis do you have renewed optimism that this will be positive for the province?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I want to clarify. I didn't say I was optimistic; I said I was optimistic prior to the federal budget. Now I'm not very optimistic. And the reason I'm not as optimistic of course . . . I'm talking about the 120 million that is going to be lost. And again I hope and plead with you that you will share what you said to the Prime Minister last night about this being devastating -- devastating for health, education, and social services in this province.

But I'm not optimistic as well because the young offenders' cost sharing has not been increased since 1989, and I don't see that happening now, given the federal budget. So in the face of increased pressures on young offenders, there's been no increase in their sharing since 1989. We understand there will be a decrease there in that cost sharing, as well as the similar decrease in legal aid. And of course in the face of the \$52 million offload on UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) and with INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and the fact that the capping, the cost sharing is now at 43 per cent rather than 50, it's pretty hard to be optimistic about any partnership with the federal government that we'll be able to help people.

We're going to have to just keep pressing. And we badly need your support to talk to your federal counterparts. Your leader, who sits in front of you, can distance herself all she wants from the federal budget, which she tried to do . . . the federal government, which she tried to do last night. But Saskatchewan people will remember that this Liberal here is the same Liberal that's in Ottawa. A Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal.

A Liberal is a Liberal. And I doubt that you did talk to the Prime Minister about the impact, the impact of the continued federal offloads. For the life of me, I can't imagine why you're not concerned about that.

Mrs. Bergman: — Well, Mr. Minister, I have some other questions for you, and I'd like to come back to that later.

In terms of salaries, the *Estimates* document shows that 68.1 million will be spent for salaries in your department, as opposed to 64.2 million last year. The total number of full-time equivalents for this year goes from . . . is nineteen hundred thirty-nine point eight compared with eighteen hundred ninety-five point three last year. Can you tell me what the reasons are for this increase of 44.5 full-time equivalents?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, the positions you refer to, 27.5 into three adolescent treatment group homes — that's for the increase there, an expanded service — three adolescent treatment group homes that we've developed in the province. And 18 full-time equivalents towards young offender custody facilities at Dales House . . . and Dales House.

So that is what I was talking about earlier. The pressures are on the young offenders' program. The increased staffing relates to that.

Mrs. Bergman: — Before we leave the matter of salaries, could you tell me if any of the following persons are employed by your department? And if yes, provide me with complete details on when you hired them, their salary, and their job description: Allan Barss, Susan Bates, Fred Bird, Paul Faris, Nina Francis, Yvonne Grey, Tom Halpenny, Michaela Keet, Ethel Korol, Sharon Lyons, Carol Marynook, Ian McCuaig, Debi McEwen, Stewart McPartlin, Andy Prebushewski, Janis Stocks, Elaine Torrie, Wendy Ward, Gail Wartman, Tim Whelan, Virginia Wilkinson, Taisha Wingerchuk.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well if you could send a list over, we'll check it out. I can't answer that right now. So if you could send it over, we'll take a look at it and get back to you on that.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, how many people are involved in the communications function in your department? What are their salaries and position titles and descriptions?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes. There are four . . . Are you going to send me the list of the people that you mentioned earlier? Okay. There are four people in that area in sort of the public education, communication and program supports, and awareness. So in a sense four in that . . . unit are we calling it? In that unit.

Mrs. Bergman: — And what are their salaries, position titles, and job descriptions?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes. We'll send it over with the rest of the information if that's okay?

Mrs. Bergman: — Sure, that's fine. Mr. Minister, Has your department done any work with Phoenix Advertising in the 1994-95 fiscal year to the end of December, say.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes we have. The cost has been approximately \$50,000 for placing ads across Canada for competitions.

Mrs. Bergman: — Were those the only projects they did was the advertising for jobs? And what was the entire cost of each project, and any other details you can provide regarding the work.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — This will be covered in the standard questions that are sent over.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, what are all of the fees for licences, inspections, and other things like that that form sources of revenue for your department?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — My officials can't think of any that there may be.

Mrs. Bergman: — Could you tell me . . . there are no fees or licences at all that apply to your department?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'm not sure how to answer that. We have no licence fees of any kind in the department in terms of our revenue. We have some fee for services — for adoption service for example. If you're looking for the source of all the revenue, we'll send that over and you can take a look at it.

I'm not sure exactly what you're getting at.

Mrs. Bergman: — That other things that there are fees paid for, adoption services is one. Are there any other services that the fees are paid for by the public?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That is the only one we can think of, but we will send you a complete list of all our revenue sources and it would include those fees so . . . as well as the, sort of, the federal sources; as well as the federal sources.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's all the questions I have for now. I'll have some more for you at a later time. Thank you and thank your officials.

(1615)

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, what I want to do right now is I want to go through some questions that we got from constituents that comes under our "Mr. Premier" program. But these are related to your department and I would just like to ask them questions, and you can either answer them or not at your . . . If you'd rather we went to the Premier, well, okay.

First question, Mr. Minister, comes from Kathy Sigstad from Zealandia and her question is, I want to know why my

government stole our family allowance cheques. I made a choice — and a good one — to stay home with my children and be a wife and mother, and let someone else have a job outside the home. I don't expect my government to pay me for that, but the little bit of family allowance and child tax credit was very helpful to me.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much and thanks for that question from Kathy Sigstad, I believe you said. Actually the family allowance before it was eliminated was deducted as a source of income for as long as I can remember, including when you were in government. And this has since been converted to the federal child tax credit benefit which then is provided where appropriate, to low income families. So it actually was taken by the federal Conservative government under Mr. Mulroney.

But I think that we're trying as best we can to provide supports to families. But that was a federal decision, that conversion. I'll be happy to meet with you to talk further about how that works, if you like.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. The questions, as you realize, don't come from me and we'll be forwarding the replies to the constituents.

This question comes from Randy Thompson from Lloydminster. And Randy wants to know why social assistance recipients are not held more accountable for the hard-earned tax dollars we provide: I am aware of cases where clients have been allowed to withdraw, without valid reason, from programs designed to promote independence and there have been no repercussions to their continuing eligibility for benefits. It disturbs me that clients are allowed to manipulate social workers and thereby allowing welfare to become a lifestyle.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'd like to thank Mr. Thompson for that question and I would suggest if Mr. Thompson has a specific case or cases, would like to refer those to me, I'd be happy to look into them.

I think though it's important to say that we believe — and we're open to ideas — we believe that we have clear expectations of people on assistance with regard to pursuing employment, education, and training opportunities.

In fact, if you look at the eight . . . I think if you look at the 11 offices we have throughout the province is the number of case-loads are down in eight of those. And the number of cases are down substantially, particularly in the areas of employable clients, which I think is a reflection of the number of jobs that are being created in the province. And you and I have had this discussion before.

I would also be happy to send Mr. Thompson a copy of the accountability measures that we have in place to try and ensure that we spend taxpayers' money as wisely as we can. And we believe that with the Provincial Auditor being by and large satisfied with our control measures that while we may always be able to make improvements, that we're doing a pretty good

job. But if there's a specific case or cases, I'd be happy to look into them.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. This question comes from Sharon Brown and she's from Prince Albert. She says, I want to know why the system makes it so easy for young people to get welfare. Any regular family discipline problem they have and don't agree with, they go to the Welfare department wanting to get a place of their own.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I thank Sharon Brown for that question. When young people, particularly under the age of 18, come to us to seek assistance, obviously we expect that the first avenue to explore or re-explore is with their own families. And we believe that that is a family obligation, to the ability of a family to do that.

I might point out to Sharon, that the number of 16- and 17-year-olds on assistance today is actually lower than it, I think, has been in five or six years. And so we believe that our efforts around greater supports to families, the initiatives through the child action plan and so on are making a positive impact at keeping families together and supporting families to support their own children.

And there are a number of other things one could say, but we believe that we're exploring connections with your own family, staying in school and providing opportunities for yourself, and trying to take steps to secure the future that young people have. And I might add, as I said earlier, the incredible progress in reducing the unemployment rate amongst young people under 25 over the last year I think has had a positive impact as well.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This next question comes from Donna Strang, and she's from Qu'Appelle. And Donna wants to know, what is going to be done to make child maintenance payments more fair to the children and parents who desperately need them? By taxing these payments you take away the little money we do receive and then wonder why our social programs are so severely used. As well, how long will it take for these changes to be made?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, thank Donna — I believe — for that question. We believe that any support to this area is welcome, and our Justice minister is working with other Justice ministers and the national government to develop a national program for child support guidelines.

And we also of course have added additional staff to legal aid over the last year, and we believe that there is important progress made on maintenance enforcement that has meant more money going to the mother with children and also has in fact resulted in some savings in the social assistance budget.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This next question comes from Holly Hordenchuk. And I apologize to everyone concerned if I mispronounced that name. She's from Assiniboia. And she wants to know if you intend to support the decision to

allow single mothers to have child support payments tax exempt.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Of course the issue of taxation is before the courts, as you know. This is, in a sense, the area of federal responsibility. This is why our Justice minister is working with other Justice ministers across the country. You can't deal with tax treatment without dealing with the level of awards. So we're continuing to participate with our counterparts — the Justice minister is — and we hope this results in the satisfactory and fair conclusion for all those involved.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, a supplementary to that. If Holly was to receive support payments, if they were tax exempt, would the welfare department consider that as income in her own situation?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, as you will know, that the social assistance program is basically a program of last resort. And the former minister from Rosthern, this has not changed since he was the minister. And basically if the award is high enough, if the maintenance order is high enough, the person may not need to be on assistance.

Basically people are obligated to pursue all avenues of support, to become as independent as possible financially. And so if there are some people who get a sufficient maintenance award, that they . . . they're not on assistance at all. And those who are on assistance and get maintenance, that is part of the other income that they generate, and if there's an insufficiency in terms of their needs and their income, then they are supplemented by social assistance, which is the intent of the program. That's been the historical practice of that program.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I appreciate your answer. I wanted to develop that with you, as much for Holly's sake as mine, because that's something that she would probably want to take into consideration if this happens. And I appreciate what you said.

This question, Mr. Minister, comes from L. Conners, from Archerwill. And he's asking . . . or she is asking, when will welfare cease to exist for young teens — young men and women who are able to work? I better read that . . . it's not quite the way it . . .

When will welfare cease to exist for young teens — young women and men who are able to work. If they have no jobs, make the parents responsible.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well I thank Mr. and Mrs. Conners for the question.

Well I would say that parents are responsible for their children, their teenage children. And of course there are fewer 16- and 17-year-olds, as examples, on assistance today than there were in the past, and that's a steady but positive trend.

The numbers are decreasing, and we believe this is why it's

important to have good, long-term economic developments to create employment opportunities, which we've been very successful at, particularly over the last year, and why programs such as Future Skills and JobStart, which are particularly directed — JobStart — to young people to get them into the labour force is a very important initiative in this budget.

And we look forward to the day where families will be strong enough, all families will be strong enough to support all of their members, and to where young people will have job opportunities as soon as they leave the school system. And we're working very hard with communities, small-business people, to make that happen. And the signs are very positive, so I'm optimistic about the future in that regard.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I heard you give the figures a while ago about the percentage of young people on welfare, and I appreciate that.

Subsequent to that question, can I ask you, do you have a criteria that you follow? How do you check out whether this young person that just got in a bit of a tiff with their parents and left? Do they have to be out of the home for a certain length of time? Do you check the circumstances? And if the parents are financially able to look after their children, do you take that into consideration? Or in other words, can a parent be wealthy and still have a child on welfare?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, well I'll just repeat again, that families are responsible for their own children, and that eligibility for benefits for SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan) clients, including 16- and 17-year-olds, require them to pursue opportunities within their capabilities. And that's a clear expectation. I think that's on the first page of the social assistance handbook.

It also, if the young people happen to be 16 and 17, keeping in mind the numbers are going down, it requires that they maintain regular attendance in school. And there are times though, there are times — and we make this through contact with the parents, through our professional judgement — that family breakdown or rejection has occurred and we need to make sure through the Canada Assistance Plan that those in need are protected.

And so we have in Saskatoon a fairly exciting project whereby young persons who are 16 and 17, their entry into the department is through one single entry point. In other words, they can't come in to get a service through different entry points in the department. So there's a focal point on 16- and 17-year-olds which may very well be why the numbers are going down, because we feel we've got a good handle on this and that we're better able to make sure we support families to take on the responsibility and to have the capacity to do that. In fact we're looking at expanding this very successful project across the entire province.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I understand from

what you said that in the range of 16 to 17 . . . what is the youngest age that a teenager can get a welfare cheque in their own name?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — The youngest age would be 16, and that happens very, very, very rarely.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think we covered whether the parents who have the responsibility for their children and I'm not so sure I heard you say whether you looked at the ability of the parents to look after their children before you issued welfare help to them. But what can you do in a case like that? I mean is there limitations? And if so, what are the limitations for your department in that circumstance?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, because the premiss is that parents are responsible for their children, so that is the first area that we try and pursue. And so it's done through contacting the family, through discussing the situation with them, making our own judgement and assessment as to whether there is some potential jeopardy for the child or the young person with regard to the possibility of abuse or that the young person could be in some danger. And then things like supervised room and board might be considered.

But the goal is always in any aspect of the department to re-integrate and to strengthen and support families and make sure they get the services that they may require. So again this single entry point we believe allows us to sort of make sure that we stay on top of that so we've got consistency across the region and hopefully then across the province.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. Then I take it that you don't really have a system of checking the ability of the parents to look after their own. And that as long as . . . If there's a danger of that child, that young person, being abused or something at home and you want to take it out of that circumstance, I guess I can accept that.

But I think what I'm trying to get in my mind, as to how you operate . . . let's just . . . for the sake of the debate here . . . family who were very wealthy and their 16-year-old left home simply because they just didn't like the duties of carrying out the garbage or making their own bed. Is there a way that you would then make that family responsible for their own children? Or do you just pick up . . . or does that person get the social services even though their family are wealthy?

Do you have a system . . . I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I'm trying to get the feeling myself as to why we see incidents where we believe that parents are comfortable, and yet they have children on welfare. And we've seen it. I'm not about to suggest that there wasn't a problem other than parental discipline. And I'm just wondering, how do we handle such a thing as that? Do you have any leeway in finding out the income of that family and their ability to look after their children?

I hope you can get through that. That's what I'm trying to figure

out. And I'll come back to it later.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well specifically in the case as you described it, that young person would be denied assistance. And we deny many young people assistance. The system, or the feel for the system we're using, usually these cases or these family situations are fairly complex and there's been a history of some tension and some struggling. They're not usually just sort of straightforward.

Some young person is mad because they — he or she — disagrees they've got to take out the garbage and runs to get assistance. There will be no cases like that where we would issue cheques. We don't issue cheques. The first thing we do is contact the family and to see what the situation is from the point of view of the parent or parents. And then, I mean, we have professional staff to make professional decisions about the ability of the family to function and manage with that person there.

In terms of the well-to-do people, there is an expectation that people are responsible, families are responsible, for their children. If the family income is not sufficient, then they have the opportunity to apply, including with that person, and the family as a whole has to qualify.

So basically we would deny the example that you referred to.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have one more question along this line, and I'm asking them as much for my own benefit as others.

And as you say, there's probably situations where we think that the parents are well off and they have the responsibility to look after their children, and maybe if we were in your position and could find out some of the reasons, maybe there is justification for that to happen.

The other question along this line I'd like to ask is, if the parents are on welfare and the young teenager becomes 16 and they decide that they don't like to live at home, and you would put that 16-year-old on a welfare assistance, would that 16-year-old be able to stay at home with the parents and draw a separate or different assistance cheque? Or would they have to be living on their own somewhere away from the parents?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No, the same applies whether you're on or off assistance; parents are responsible for the children. And so that young person would be at home with the family because the family is responsible.

You know I appreciate your interest in this area. I would be happy to get across to you one of our application forms so you could see the things that are required. You have to list your income and your assets and all of your . . . the various requests. You sign a declaration verifying that the information is true. And then we have ways to try and ensure that that's the information, that the information that is there is accurate in terms of some of the verification that we've had previous

discussions about. So that's kind of the process. And maybe if you saw the application form, that would help you see the process and the assessment that we go through.

But in your case example, parents are responsible for the children, whether they're on or off assistance. A lot of people come on assistance, and they go off assistance, you know. There's a good movement through the system because people temporarily need to be on assistance, but they also move on to employment, training, and education programs as well.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll maybe just leave that for a little while.

Here's a question comes from Murray Randolph from Aberdeen. And, Mr. Minister, this is a little different kind of a question. And it says, from Murray Randolph: what does the government plan on doing to help blind people beat prejudice and become employed in a rewarding job and become financially independent and not have to depend on the insufficient funds from welfare for a condition that cannot be helped?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Certainly that's a very good question. And I'll start my response by saying that we would be very happy to have someone sit down with Mr. Randolph if he would like to. Certainly we believe that disabled people have very important rights in terms of the opportunities for education, training, and employment.

I know when I met with the council on the disabled last week, we went over some of these very issues. And I was pleased that — in fact I haven't even told the deputy minister this — but I was pleased that the council was very complimentary towards the Department of Social Services and the government in general in terms of the sensitivity and supports to disabled people. And they felt very, very positive about that, and we need to continue to build on that. And we were exploring ways in which we could work more closely together.

As to specific programs for people who might be sight handicapped, I can't say there was something specific other than the opportunities to have some special needs considerations.

The issue of beating prejudice and discrimination is a very important point. And I think that through better education and awareness, it's incumbent on all of us in government and in our communities to work hard to make sure that we have a society that is understanding, promotes tolerance and sensitivity to all of our members.

And I think through the action plan for children we're trying to, as government, as many departments of government, to work with communities to strengthen families, to strengthen communities, to ensure that we all feel a sense of collective responsibility for the well-being of everyone.

So if Mr. Randolph would like, we would be very happy to have someone sit down with him on his specific situation.

(1645)

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. And we will pass that information on to Mr. Randolph. And what I'll try and do is I'll try and find out the actual address for him and send that over to your office.

And I think I agree with you — a lot of times we are guilty of prejudice. And I think sometimes it's innocent in that we don't stop and realize that this person is . . . or that is handicapped. We walk by and don't acknowledge the fact that some people have had some tough luck.

And I agree with you that we have to take a broader outlook and try to get these people into society in a meaningful position where they can feel good about themselves. I have no problem with that, and I certainly appreciate your response on this.

The next question, Mr. Minister, that I have, comes from Marlus Kulas from Regina, and it's quite lengthy. So I'll go through it fairly slow so you can pick it up.

And Marlus, M-a-r-l-u-s K-u-l-a-s, Marlus Kulas: I want to know why the changes to the post-adoption services didn't go far enough. Why should an adoptee or birth parent have to pay Social Services \$300 for a copy of birth registration, when anyone else can go to the Department of Vital Statistics and get a copy for \$20? This is very discriminatory. I am an adult adoptee, but I can't get a copy without birth-parent consent. I have been told by Social Services that my biological mother is dead. They won't even tell me where she is buried. We were hoping for more openness.

Did I go too fast? If I did, I'll go through it again.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I appreciate very much this example from Marlus and I'm sorry to hear about her personal situation. Again we would be very pleased to have someone meet with her and I think . . . I know we would do that in a very sensitive fashion.

Certainly the fee is not just for registration. There are other services that are provided for that. I think that the important thing to remember is that fee can be waived and often is waived. We certainly would not deny people access to the information like that and would be most willing to waive it if necessary.

With regard to the post-adoption services, the recently announced strategy not going far enough, I think what we were trying to do is to balance the needs of everyone involved. And I by and large I think, would say that about 90 to 95 per cent of the feedback that I've had from the people who are primarily involved, that is the adoption parents, the birth moms, and the adult adoptive children, by and large they're very satisfied with this.

But there are some who feel we didn't quite go far enough. And I might say there were some who felt we went a little bit too far.

So what we're striving for is a matter of balance, and we went through a very extensive public consultations to make sure that we did have a balance because this is a very delicate matter. And it's a very complex issue and an issue where those people involved have a lot of strong feelings.

So we believe that we're on the right track and would be happy to meet with Marlus as well to talk a little more about what we were trying to accomplish in our more open strategy. She wanted us to be more open and I think she would probably agree that it is more open than it was before.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad to hear that you do waive the fee because I had heard you in a previous exchange with the third party that you didn't have any other fees. And so when I saw this, I was a little concerned. And I do think you're on the right track in opening it up. Maybe it will take a little while, but I think I agree with you.

Mr. Chairman, my colleague has a few questions on adoption while we're at it, so I will defer to him.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I believe it's two or three weeks ago I brought a question to your office, and I don't recall receiving a response or getting . . . a request that came by a mother in the Kipling area who had written me about her daughter, trying to find out where her daughter is that she gave up for adoption. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you'd have any information regarding that. The name of the lady was Francis Emro from the Kipling area who had called me. And I'm wondering if you'd recall that. I sent a letter across to your office, and if there'd be any information that you might have regarding that request.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I apologize. I remember that discussion with you, and I'll have to follow up because typically we are back within about 10 or 12 days in terms of response. If you've not heard, we get a lot of these, and I just don't remember the specifics. But I'd be very happy to look into that as soon as we leave here and get back to you tomorrow with some sort of progress report on that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, another concern was raised and brought to my attention and it's regarding a situation where a child has been adopted out but I believe the family still have the ability to have some contact, although they have lost contact recently. And I guess the question that was raised, is there a possibility of a family being able to have their child over, and in this case I think they're asking for the child to be with them or spend some time with them during the Easter break.

Now I'm not sure all the details on it. I'll have to get some more information on it and get back to you. But it sounds to me like they do have contact with the child and there's some concerns as to whether the child is really being cared for properly in their adopted home, concerns that possibly the child is now being . . . or they're being given less of an opportunity to meet with the

child or have opportunities to have the child in their home; come and visit them.

And I'm wondering what takes place in these circumstances where a person is basically . . . I'm not exactly sure if it's a total adoption or they're put as a ward or put into — I forget the term I'm looking for -- another situation where they're . . . a foster home I believe is what I'm looking for — a foster situation.

And I'm wondering how individuals . . . whether the individuals when a child is placed in the foster home, if that child has the ability, or if Social Services grants the ability for that child to spend time with the parents, and whether Social Services takes the time to make sure that that foster home isn't interfering with or restricting opportunities to visit with that child.

And like I say, I don't want to be too specific as far as bringing a name forward, but I'm wondering if you could give me an idea about how Social Services handles a situation or circumstances such as this. And I'll try to get more specific information with you and bring it to you privately. But I'm just wondering what the process is where a child is in a foster home and the foster parents and there is opportunities for the child to visit with the natural parents and if they become restrictive. What's the policy of Social Services regarding this?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well I would be happy when you get the specifics to sit down with you and sort of go through that. But if I understand your question, it's a child who is in a foster home where the natural parents still are the guardians but they're officially in care of the department, but in the foster home. Those arrangements would be done through . . . First of all, the child would be in care due to a court sanction and the visiting rights and privileges would be done through agreement between the parties involved, facilitated and worked out with the support I think of the departmental social worker. I'm not sure what to say beyond that. That's sort of the typical process and usually it's by agreement. Then there's Easter visits and that sort of thing. But with regard to adoptions or a specific case, I'd be very happy to chat with you about it.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.