

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
April 7, 1995

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions today to present from Stony Rapids. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support Bill 31, An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Property Rights), which will benefit all property owners in Saskatchewan, and specifically firearms owners, in order to halt the federal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present petitions today on behalf of the people from the Tompkins, Hazlet, and Gull Lake areas of the province. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to the present legislation regarding firearms 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.

I'm happy to present this today, Mr. Speaker.

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 funding toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Penner: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 29 students from St. Joseph's School in Swift Current. They're sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're

accompanied by their teacher, Kelly Hammond, and the chaperons, Vivian Lahaye, Barry Cuthbert, and Debbie Michelson.

I look forward to meeting with these students at 11 o'clock in room 218. I hope that they enjoy their stay here in Regina and I hope that they enjoy the question period. So please welcome the students from Swift Current.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — I'd like to introduce to you and through you with great pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, my partner and husband for almost 27 years, in your gallery. As everyone here knows, our spouses and our families are the ones who sacrifice most for our service to this province. And I'm sure you'll join with me in welcoming him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me this morning to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature, on behalf of my colleague, the member from Regina Elphinstone, a group of seven students from SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology). They're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

They're part of the English as a second language program. They're here accompanied by their teacher, Ron Mang. They will shortly be having a tour of the building and I look forward to meeting with them later on for tea and conversation. Please welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Diefenbaker's Centennial Birthday

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. 1995 marks the centennial of the birth of the only Canadian prime minister from the province of Saskatchewan, the Rt. Hon. John George Diefenbaker who was born 100 years ago this year.

Dick Spencer of Prince Albert is the author of an excellent book about the Chief. On the cover slip of the book, prominent Canadians like the former governor general, Ramon Hnatyshyn, and the hon. member for Saskatoon Riversdale, the Premier of Saskatchewan . . . and they describe John Diefenbaker as a truly great Canadian patriot who stood for a united Canada — a statesman who was admired by countless Canadians from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

The book *Trumpets and Drums* by Dick Spencer is an excellent book about Dief the Chief, and I'm pleased to note it is in the Legislative Library. Mr. Speaker, as a member of this Assembly who knew John Diefenbaker, I do believe that we in Canada

should follow a tradition of our American neighbours where they honour presidents with a postage stamp to mark the centennial of their birth date.

On September 18, 1995, it would be wonderful if Canada Post issued a stamp honouring the 100th birthday of John Diefenbaker and issue it on that day at the post office in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and post offices all over Canada.

The bust of Mr. Diefenbaker in the rotunda of this Legislative Assembly is a constant reminder of the man from Prince Albert and his legacy in being a champion of freedom and a defender of national unity in Canada. I think it very appropriate that Saskatchewan's only prime minister in Canadian history be remembered on the centennial of his birth date.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be sending a copy of my statement to the minister responsible for Canada Post and also to the Prime Minister of Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists Annual Meeting

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists is holding its 50th annual general meeting and conference, April 6 to 8 in Saskatoon. I want to recognize the SIA (Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists) and also Saskatchewan agrologists for the job they do in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Agrologists play a major role in the advancement of agriculture in Saskatchewan. The SIA is instrumental in maintaining high standards of practice in professional agrologists. It also fosters, among all segments of society, recognition of the contribution by agriculture to our economic well-being.

The province has historically looked to professional agrologists to deliver the agriculture programs and services needed by our producers. Today, agrologists are involved in a variety of activities including food quality, marketing, environmental protection, as well as production. The agriculture industry looks to its professionals for the delivery of agricultural programs. The professional agrologist also has responsibility to transfer the latest in agricultural technology, enabling the development of a strong, diverse agriculture industry capable of meeting today's challenges.

To assist the SIA and its members meet these challenges, this government last year promoted the new Saskatchewan agrologists' Act which was effective December 1, 1994.

I call on all members of the legislature to join me in congratulating the SIA and its members for the work they are doing and in wishing them a successful annual meeting and conference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SEDA's Annual Historic Model Legislature

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From time to time, the members of this Assembly lend their chairs to young people from across Saskatchewan. This weekend is one of those times. The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association, or SEDA, will hold its annual historic model legislature.

SEDA's model legislature is unique in that it holds its sessions in the context of another historical time period. This year the youths who replace us focus on the 1930s. Several topics to be debated include farm debt, farm relief, unemployment, the civil service, and public works projects.

I am also honoured, Mr. Speaker, to have been asked to serve as one of the Speakers for the model legislature, along with my colleague from Regina Albert North. I only hope that I may be as capable as yourself in that position.

Mr. Speaker, SEDA, which is one of the many organizations to benefit from Saskatchewan Lotteries, asked me to thank all members and staff of the legislature whose cooperation helps make their event successful. In return, I wish to thank SEDA for their continuing desire to afford young people with a legislative experience.

I also wish the best of luck to the model legislators. I hope that the experience of sitting in this great legislature will be as memorable to them as it is to me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Achievement Award to Dr. Ahab Spence

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to a member of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College who has received an award that was highly deserved and a long time coming.

The second annual aboriginal achievement awards were televised on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) last night. One of the 14 recipients was Dr. Ahab Spence of SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College). I should say, Doctor, Professor, Reverend Ahab Spence.

Dr. Spence has devoted his long and distinguished life to the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual education of his people. He was born in Stanley Mission during a time when, shall we say, advanced education for aboriginal people was not encouraged. Dr. Spence became a teacher, a minister of the Anglican church, and a professor.

Now and for the past several years, he is a professor of Indian languages, literature, and linguistics, at the federated college — this at an age when most people are long retired.

Equally deserving of this award is his wife of over 50 years,

Bette Spence, a wise and respected elder at the college and an accomplished artist. They have several distinguished children including one who writes for the *Leader-Post*, for which they can be forgiven.

I ask members to join in paying tribute to the Spences for their contribution to Canadian life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Penitentiary Warden Retires

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After serving 31 years as warden at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert, a distinguished alumni at that formidable institution has just been released.

Warden Jim O'Sullivan has retired, and as the editorial in the Prince Albert *Herald* said, Prince Albert has lost one of its strongest builders. Jim O'Sullivan spent 21 years of his years with the Correctional Services of Canada as warden. If we on the outside think back on the changes in our society during that time, we will recognize that these years have been very demanding on those whose job is one of the most difficult in society.

Increasingly, they have had to take on more prisoners who have been given longer sentences and keep them in custody with limited resources; and at the same time, to maintain a professional relationship between the penitentiary and the community of Prince Albert. That, Mr. Speaker, is a tough job.

We who have a close association with those who work at the correctional institutions understand the strain perhaps more than others. At any rate, Mr. O'Sullivan earned his reputation as a fair, supportive, cool, determined leader — a reputation recognized in 1993 when he was named warden of the year by his North American peers.

He has served his country and his city honourably and well and he deserves recognition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Indoor Track Games Open in Yorkton

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is an important event which will be getting under way in my riding later this afternoon, the 20th annual Yorkton Sunrise Lions Indoor Track Games will be held at the Parkland Agriplex in our city.

One thousand athletes from over 50 schools across Saskatchewan and some from Manitoba will be taking part in these games, and some 200 volunteers will be involved to ensure that these indoor games run smoothly.

Students, mostly between the ages of 10 and 15 years, will be competing in carded and uncarded events such as the high

jump, the long jump, shot-put, races, and many relays.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this event worthwhile in providing opportunities for young athletes to develop and measure their athletic skills, it also gives young people a chance to meet; form new friendships and acquaintances.

The Yorkton Sunrise track meet continues to be the premier event of track meets in Saskatchewan. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my best wishes to the athletes, to meet director Mr. Dave Baron, and to the Sunrise Lions and the many volunteers who will be involved. And I know that the 1995 games in Yorkton will be again the best ever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

MLA Pension Plan

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, your sweetheart pension deal just keeps getting sweeter. As if your \$80,000-a-year pension wasn't enough, if you happen to get re-elected — happen to get re-elected — that pension will jump to 80 . . . to \$100,000 a year. Two million dollars or more by the time you turn 80, paid for by the Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Mr. Premier, the question is: is it fair, is it fair that you stand to collect \$2 million pension when you have attacked the pocketbooks of very Saskatchewan taxpayer? Mr. Premier, when are you going to do the right thing and roll back these outrageous pensions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering the fact that there was a newspaper report painting the worst possible scenario of the McDowell recommendations, I guess one should be able to anticipate that this question would be asked. And I certainly have anticipated it.

I want to say to the House, and to the member opposite, that clearly there may be an intended consequence of Mr. McDowell's report, as has been indicated by the media report and by the member opposite. But I also want to say that that kind of an intended consequence is something that will have to be taken into consideration when the McDowell report is considered by members of this House, because I'm sure that it's not something that was intended by Mr. McDowell in his report.

But I want to, having said that, also say that government will show the same kind of leadership on that as it has shown in the past, as it has shown by having MLAs' (Member of the Legislative Assembly) salaries frozen since 1991 at 1990 rates; having cabinet ministers take a 5 per cent cut in their salaries;

having the number of MLAs reduced from 66 to 58, which members oppose; having had a 25 per cent cut in communications allowances for members — that's leadership, Mr. Speaker.

This government has shown leadership in the past, it's going to show leadership in the future, and I'm quite prepared to compare that leadership to the leadership of the former government or the leadership of the Liberal Party in this House, which it's displayed recently.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well it may be the worst possible scenario for the taxpayers of this province, but the best possible scenario for the Premier occurs that he lives to be 80 years old. Show some leadership and accept the pension plan that you yourself touted the best in Canada, instead of your obscene one.

But fortunately for the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, it's the answers like that from the Deputy Premier that are going to keep the Premier from getting re-elected and getting that ridiculous pension raise.

My question is again to the Premier. Under the new scenario, you and your four cabinet colleagues stand to collect eight and half million dollars by the time you turn 80 — eight and a half million dollars, paid for by the Saskatchewan taxpayer — taxpayers that have had their own pensions cut, that have seen their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) cheques cut; taxpayers that have seen their pay cheques cut by your tax increases, but did you take a cut? No. You stand to collect a hundred thousand dollars a year from those very same taxpayers.

Mr. Premier, enough is enough. Will you set an example? Set that leadership and roll back your obscene pension. Do it today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the member has changed the debate and the questioning to a leadership, because that's exactly what I want to talk about. I have indicated that the McDowell commission has . . . and have indicated, Mr. Speaker, that the McDowell commission has some recommendations with possibly some unintended consequences. And I think that that's something that's going to have to be addressed. I have no doubt about that.

But I want to go back and remind the members the leadership that this government is showing — all of the things which I have mentioned, plus the fact that operating expenditures of government have been cut by \$276 million this year over the operating expenditures of the Government of Saskatchewan in 1990-91 when the Tories were over here on the benches of . . . the treasury benches.

I want to say to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker, that the spending, for example, of Executive Council has been reduced

by \$1 million or 13 per cent.

I want to ask the member . . . ask this question: why didn't his colleagues show the same leadership when Senator Eric Berntson, the former deputy premier of the Conservative government, became a senator and gets senator's pay and double dips with his formula-planned provincial pension? Why didn't they show leadership then?

I ask the Liberals why didn't they show leadership when the first day the Liberal leader walked into this House her first act was to walk into the Legislative Assembly Office and demand a 37 per cent increase in her personal salary, which she got; the only increase for any MLA in this legislature since 1991. Why didn't they show better leadership than that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the headline in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* reads: A pension bonanza awaits veteran MLAs. Well, Mr. Premier, you're getting the bonanza while the member from Elphinstone lives outside of his constituency on the penderosa north of Regina.

You talk about the cutting the pensions and the severances for previous MLAs. We agree with that, Mr. Minister. We would indeed cut off the pensions that Eric Berntson is receiving and that Allan Blakeney is receiving. Allan Blakeney sat in here for an extra length of time just to collect that severance package, Mr. Minister.

My question is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Your own members are interfering with your member asking a question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, my question is again to the Premier who defends the indefensible while the taxpayers and business in this province are mired in his tax swamp, up to their knees in alligators.

Mr. Minister, a \$100,000-a-year, taxpayer-funded pension is outrageous. You know it, I know it, and the public knows it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, when are you going to finally do the right thing and get rid of these obscene pensions.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting dissertation by Conservatives who have well developed the reputation of being the worst managers as a government this province has ever had. And therefore we have today, which our young people are saddled with, a \$14 billion debt because of the kind of spending that they had.

Now the member opposite knows very well that the pensions in Saskatchewan for members of this legislature were formed in 1979. The taxpayers association of Saskatchewan reports that because of that reform it has saved taxpayers of Saskatchewan \$12 million. That's not insignificant.

Now why do they stay on this topic in their grasp desperately to try to save themselves from falling out of the bottom of the polls where they are today.

Because they don't want to talk about the Statistics Canada report today which talks about our unemployment rate being again the lowest in all of Canada. That the labour force of 486,000 persons in February of 1995 is 4,000 more than in 1994 at the same time. That the 449,000 people employed in Saskatchewan in March of 1995 is 9,000 more than a year ago in March of 1994. That agriculture has seen an employment increase of 2,000 people.

That's why they're raising this issue. Because they don't want to talk about those kinds of things because of the success of this government in job creation in Saskatchewan which is only beginning and will continue into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

VLT Expansion

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister has one thing wrong, and that is that we are rising in the polls. It's the Liberals that are dropping out of the bottom of the poll. They're on the downward trend.

All right, Mr. Speaker, it looks to me as if this is Friday.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It looks to me as if it's Friday, and I have a choice of five ministers out of eighteen to ask a question.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The member knows full well that that comment is not acceptable in this legislature.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have five critic responsibilities is what I was referring to. So, Mr. Speaker, I choose to ask this morning a question of the minister responsible for gambling.

Mr. Speaker, we finally started to get a little bit of progress out of minister number . . . what's the number . . .

An Hon. Member: — Six.

Mr. Neudorf: — Five, minister no. 5, for gambling. She finally started to admit that she has a gambling problem. It was a small admission, mind you, but that's a good step for any gambling addict to take and that is first of all the admission.

Madam Minister, last night you said that you might allow communities to ban VLTs (video lottery terminal) through a community plebiscite. Would you clarify that new policy of yours, Madam Minister. Exactly how would this new policy work?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank the member from Rosthern for his question. I would have called that a very liberal interpretation of my remarks, but seeing as you're asking it, I won't say that.

Our policy on VLTs is as it's always been — to have controlled and limited expansion; to have a ceiling on the number of VLTs in Saskatchewan; for the purpose of keeping jobs in Saskatchewan, specifically rural Saskatchewan. You know very well that it was the rural hoteliers that approached us for this. Now communities do have a right to express their opinion on a range of things and we as governments listen.

And I would just have to say that I would reaffirm my previous comments, that a plebiscite would only work if it was held in Alberta, Manitoba, and in the United States, because that's where our problem is coming from in terms of loss of revenue in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Madam Minister, on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio yesterday, you indicated that each community was going to have the ability now to determine their own steps that they wanted to take. But, Madam Minister, it seems to me that today you're right back and that you're short . . . that your repentance — let me put it that way — in front of the church groups last night was pretty short-lived. You're right back now to your standard, uncaring answers.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that you do not really care, Madam Minister, that people oppose your slot machines; that people are being hurt by your slot machines; that every day people pump their pay cheques into your slot machines on the false hope that they may hit the jackpot, like the Premier hit with his pension.

And, Madam Minister, while the Premier hides behind his stack of money, all you care about is the money your slot machines suck out of people and suck out of communities. Like your gambling commissioner said . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Does the member have a question? I want the member to ask his question.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is the question that people have been asking us, and that is that people are telling us, communities are telling us, that they are not allowed to opt out of taxes. And that's what this is, Madam Minister, a tax.

And so I question, Madam Minister, when are you going to admit your gambling policy is nothing more than a tax? A tax on people that can least afford to pay it. When are you going to admit that, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for his question. I never tire of reminding

you that in 1983 you privatized bingo and thereby expanded the bingo gaming activity in this province by 2,500 per cent. I don't recall you showing any particular concern over who was spending their money there or what they were doing.

I would have to say that the one thing that has changed recently in gaming in Saskatchewan is that we have a policy of prevention, education, and treatment, which never existed previous to now. Even though I have had people talk to me who have a gaming addiction, who have said that they had their gaming addiction many years ago, well in advance of any recent developments.

So I would just have to say that our policy remains as it is: to have controlled and limited expansion, to have machines in areas that are age restricted, and to respond to the concerns of rural hoteliers and rural communities about loss of revenues over the border.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MLA Pension Plan

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, this pension mess just gets deeper and deeper. Today I table over 200 letters from people in my constituency who disagree with the outrageous size of these pensions. These letters were mailed to me before the Premier refused to roll back his million dollar pension.

One of the letters states, and I quote: Politicians are supposed to be in parliament to serve the people and represent them, not line their own pockets. This person does not believe it is fair that our Premier and a select few will receive million dollar pensions while they do without.

My question is to the Premier: how can you put yourself on a pedestal and ask the people of this province to pay higher personal income tax, higher gas taxes, higher utility rates, and increased drug costs, to deal with the deficit and debt, while you refuse to do your part by rolling back your million dollar pension?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I think, I think . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little fascinated. I would suggest to the member opposite that she check the letter which she quotes from because it may very well be that the letter she got is talking about federal Liberals who have the pension in Ottawa which is far, far different than the pension in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which was reformed in 1979. I just invite her to check that letter.

And the other thing, Mr. Speaker, who is it that raised gasoline tax in Canada this year? It was the federal Liberals. Now I say to the member opposite, let's stop being such a hypocrite, along

with her leader.

She knows very well that whereas . . . It is in this province we have addressed and provided leadership by reducing the cost to the taxpayer by freezing MLAs salaries at the 1990 rates, by reducing members' of cabinet salaries by 5 per cent, by reducing the cost of communications allowance by 25 per cent, and the list goes on. And I ask the member to address that question.

And while she does that, Mr. Speaker, I want her to explain in this House why her leader, the member from Greystone, while this was happening, in the form of leadership, was demanding a 37 per cent, \$17,000-a-year increase in her personal salary. And that caucus was demanding about a year ago a 352 per cent increase in their caucus grant. That's not leadership, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is leadership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, every cabinet minister received a 75 per cent pay increase and within a week of being appointed to cabinet. Obviously what's good for the goose is not good for the gander. Mr. Speaker, we need a little leadership here, and we are sure not getting it from the Hon. Premier.

You are trying to hide behind teachers and other retired workers. I quote another concerned constituent: I contributed to a pension fund for 35 years. It is nowhere near as generous as those listed

Hardworking people like this pensioner are not going to collect \$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, since I was elected, I have tried to lead by example by refusing to take per diems. This has saved the taxpayers almost \$10,000 since I was elected. My question to the Premier: since the Premier has refused to lead by example, will you now follow my lead and sacrifice your extraordinarily high pension to benefit the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, the member for Shaunavon seems a little exercised today, and I don't blame him if he was embarrassed, as I think he should be, about his leader and her performance and the way she has sort of operated in this House with her big increase.

But I want to say to the member opposite that the people . . . the question that people are really asking is why do the Liberals . . .

An Hon. Member: — No, this is what they're asking.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — You think, Mr. Speaker, the member for Shaunavon might want to hear the answer to the question?

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the member who asks the question that the people are asking, why does the Liberal caucus think that they're special? Why does the Liberal leader think that they're special? Why is it that in December 1991 — that's the date when the Liberal leader was the only member of this House — the first act that she performed was to stomp in here, go to the Legislative Assembly Office, and demand a 37 per cent increase in her pay — even the rules did not allow it, and she wanted to do it in spite of the rules. That wasn't leadership, Mr. Speaker, that was the Liberal leader, as this Liberal caucus, looking at their own personal self-interest. That's one of the issues here.

I want to say, why? Why are they trying to do this rather than talk about jobs and the economy? Because although the Conservatives have nowhere to slip in the polls because they're on the bottom already, they're slipping so fast that there is a debate taking place, maybe even among those members, to dump that leader after the next election because they don't think she can meet the grade.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Five of these privileged MLAs are planning to run again in the impending election. If they are lucky enough to retain their seat, they will stand to substantially increase their take of taxpayer dollars. The Deputy Premier stands to gain over 16,500 more pension dollars if he serves one more term and then retires.

I would like to quote from another of my constituents: I am a widow, mother of three children. I get less than \$1,000 a month from pension.

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier will gain more in one month than my widowed constituent will receive for her entire annual pension.

My question is to the Deputy Premier: how can you stand there and say the people agree with you receiving a million dollar pension when they clearly don't?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member from Regina North West — I think that's the correct name of the riding — I want to ask the member from Regina North West, has she written to the Prime Minister and complained about the federal Liberal pensions? I want to ask her, has she talked to her leader and asked her why in this so-called Bill which her leader has proposed in this House she has not included her brother, Mr. Ham, who was a member of this House and is on the old formula plan? Is there a double standard here, Mr. Speaker?

I want to ask her, why doesn't she talk about jobs? The reason is because this government is creating jobs. Why doesn't she talk about balancing the budget? Because this government has balanced the budget. Or talk about reform to the health care? Because this government has got a plan.

Why doesn't she talk about things? I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Because the Liberal Party does not have any kind of a plan. They don't have a plan and therefore they can't talk about it. The only plan they've got is protecting Liberals in this House and outside the House who are living on the old formula plan, and I say, Mr. Speaker, it's a question of selfish self-interest which is exemplified by the leader of this Liberal Party in December of 1991 when she was the only person who asked for an increase in her salary in spite of the rules and is the only person who's received a \$17,000 a year . . . in her salary without blinking an eye, and that's not leadership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Construction Tender

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour told this Assembly that the opposition brought false information to this Assembly regarding the recent SaskTel tendering.

The minister, in his usual arrogance, told this Assembly that the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, Westridge Construction, which was a non-union company. Well you folks opposite know that that was just a crock of crap and nothing else.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I don't know whether the member's language is limited, but that kind of language is simply not acceptable in this Assembly and I ask the member to withdraw those words.

Mr. Goohsen: — I withdraw those words, Mr. Speaker. There's no use trying to rephrase anything like that. I'll just go on with the point.

The manager of Westridge said that his company could have done the job for \$23,000 cheaper if he didn't have to follow the NDP (New Democratic Party) government's union preference policy. He said that the extra cost is all because of the premiums that must be paid through the union system.

Now there it is, Mr. Speaker — a 10 per cent tax on Saskatchewan people that goes straight to their union buddies. Now I'm wondering if the minister will stand up and tell the people of this province how this can possibly be a level playing-field for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to go on except the comments of the member opposite. Mr. Speaker, let us engage in an act of extreme generosity and take the member at his word and assume that the facts are accurate. And we have to do that.

But let's engage in an act of extreme generosity and accept the member at his word and the facts are accurate. What are we saying? We're saying there's an extra \$23,000 to be spread

among tradespeople who have enjoyed a very meagre, difficult existence over the past 10 years. And that's all we're saying. And I do not feel members in this Assembly should flee from that.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me make a comment about the nature of this issue. It was raised yesterday by the member from Shaunavon who quoted a letter from the Wheat Pool, as I recall it, who raised this issue of fair tendering.

An Hon. Member: — He left something out.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, there was a part of this that was left out. What was left out was the last paragraph from the Wheat Pool, who said:

We are extremely concerned about the potential of escalating cost, particularly the impact of the federal government's approach on long-standing policies on transportation issues.

What the Wheat Pool is saying is this is a trivial issue; there are some real important issues out there which you should be raising, instead of these trivial issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — My next question is to the Minister of Justice — that's if he feels up to answering a question about his portfolio today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the minister if he would tell me if he thought it was discriminatory to refuse to hire someone or to refuse to rent an apartment to someone on the basis of their union affiliation.

Now after one of his usual glib jokes, he said to us, Mr. Speaker, that he would look into the matter. Well he's had time to look into the matter, and I'd like to know what his answer is today.

I want to know if he's going to answer the question today or if he's going to do another one of his silly, childish little pranks and refuse to get serious about a serious matter.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, the question period is indeed descending to a new low when members ask that sort of a question.

Mr. Speaker, something has struck me as interesting about this question period. Four years ago at this time, every single question which was raised by the then opposition ended with the phrase, why don't you call an election? I don't hear Liberals and Tories opposite asking that question, why don't you call an election? We never seem to hear that from members opposite.

I wonder why that is, Mr. Speaker, on the eve of what the press speculate may well be the eve of an election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Electronic Library Information System Announced

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am hesitating to get into my ministerial statement with all this election talk, but I think I'll proceed.

Mr. Speaker, this morning in Saskatoon my colleague, the Hon. Carol Carson, participated in an announcement of the funding to develop a province-wide electronic library information system.

The Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure works program has approved \$1.51 million for this initiative. The province will provide \$569,520, the federal government \$249,480; and the local library boards will contribute \$700,000.

Mr. Speaker, libraries have a very vital role in providing people with access to information. The community electronic library network projects will bring us closer to the vision of a province-wide electronic library. A vision that wherever people live in Saskatchewan, they will have vastly improved access to all information, programs, and services, available to the province's library systems.

In the world where information is a highly valued commodity, Saskatchewan people must have easy, affordable, universal access to information. This is even more critical for people who live in remote areas of our province; \$500,000 of the total project funding will be used to establish a matching grant fund for local libraries in partnership with other information service providers in the community. The matching grants will be used to create local library data systems and to provide the capacity to connect local library networks with a province-wide system. Funding will also be used to create an electronic union catalogue which will combine the listings of all books in all libraries in the system.

The province-wide electronic library system will also include access to the worldwide Internet. Saskatchewan is the only one of two places in all of Canada that is providing Internet universally to everybody in Saskatchewan no matter where they live.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that speaks very well of this province. It speaks very well of the people of Saskatchewan and it speaks well about the advances which we are making, and providing the leadership for all of the rest of Canada, which this province is noted for.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan, I might conclude by saying, is very pleased to contribute to this exciting project which is putting us in the forefront of providing library services in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for sending over his statement after the end of question period. I'm very glad that the government is finally recognizing the importance of libraries after having cut the funding for libraries over the past three years.

So, Mr. Speaker, while it's going to be important for the people of Saskatchewan, in particular rural Saskatchewan, to know where the knowledge is available, it's going to be even more important, Mr. Speaker, that they actually have access to those books rather than just knowing that the book is available some place.

So it's very important, Mr. Speaker, that libraries be continued to be supported across this province, not just with information systems that allow them to know something is available, but with the actual information being available to them, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a good move to allow this to happen but the provincial government needs to further support libraries, further than what they are currently doing. Thank you very much.

(1045)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Liberal Party, we too would like to commend those players in such an important project. A special thanks and commendation to local library boards and in fact the federal government for recognizing the importance of the library system.

And I feel that the federal government themselves should really be commended for initiating the Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure program, which is the catalyst for such important programs, and in allowing local library boards, and I guess the provincial government, for partaking in these projects.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 13 — An Act to amend The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a few comments with respect to the Bill before I ask for leave to adjourn, or beg leave to adjourn the debate.

The Act being amended provides the authority for the taxation of non-Crown oil and gas produced in the province.

Amendments will introduce new powers to: (1) assist in the collection of unpaid taxes; (2) provide for the use of an average price in the determination of taxes on freehold natural gas production; and (3) includes some modest housekeeping changes.

Many of the amendments are similar to those being proposed for The Crown Minerals Act, and allows for consistency in the treatment of Crown and non-Crown oil and gas.

The new revenue collection provisions will allow the minister to collect unpaid amounts from a third party who is, or is about to become, indebted to the delinquent taxpayer. Before serving a third-party demand, the minister would have to certify the unpaid amounts in a certificate and file it with the Court of Queen's Bench. Notice will be given to the delinquent taxpayer before attempting to recover the unpaid amounts from the third party. Similar provisions for the collection of unpaid amounts are contained in The Revenue and Financial Services Act and in The Income Tax Act.

Now this Bill includes a provision to allow regulations to be made providing for the use of an average price in the determination of taxes on freehold natural gas production. Alberta recently introduced the use of average prices to simplify natural gas royalty calculation and reporting procedures.

The department has been working with oil and gas industry associations to determine if administration could be simplified in Saskatchewan by using average rather than actual prices received. A decision will be made on this matter in the next few months.

The government is now introducing the enabling legislation in order to implement the simplified administration process as soon as possible. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Small Explorers and Producers Association have been consulted on the amendments.

Now I understand that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Small Explorers and Producers Association have been consulted on several fronts. The official opposition is also in the process of consulting with industry representatives who may be affected by the Bill. And we find that there may be more than we first thought.

We have some reservations about the government's new revenue collection provisions. I'm interested in hearing if other jurisdictions have adopted this approach of going after a third party for the collection of unpaid taxes.

We will be asking in committee on how many occasions this new revenue collecting provision could have been utilized in Saskatchewan in the last fiscal year, and how much money would have been involved.

The minister states in his second reading speech that adequate and appropriate notice will be given to the delinquent taxpayer

before the third party is approached for the money. I note that in the legislation that this notice is a total of seven days. I wonder . . . in fact dispute that this is adequate and an appropriate notice.

The matter of averaging prices is also addressed in this legislation, and I'm confident that after the government has completed its consultations that this method will likely be adopted.

Because we have not completed our consultations on this matter and with this Bill, I would beg leave to adjourn debate at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 14

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My comments on this Bill will be similar to that of Bill 13. After we've quickly reviewed it, I see that it is quite similar to the freehold oil and gas legislation.

New provisions within Bill 14 will allow the minister to use a certificate process which the minister claims simplifies and speeds up the process to obtain the equivalent of a court judgement for the recovery of debt. This so-called certificate can then be used to recover unpaid amounts from a third party such as the purchaser of a Crown mineral.

Now right off the bat, before I've heard back from association, the minister asserts . . . or in favour of this Bill . . . I have a problem with the third party being responsible for debts they do not rightfully owe. We want to find out if any other provinces such as Alberta can serve a third party a tax bill such as this.

Besides, most oil and gas companies sending huge royalty cheques to the provincial government, which is proven by financial statements from 1994 budget *Estimates*. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't imagine that there are many in the industry with accounts that are in arrears.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I am waiting to hear back from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, the Saskatchewan Mining Association, and other members in the industry. We want to know exactly what they think of third-party billing, just how much they were consulted on this legislation, and other questions in addition.

In the minister's second reading speech, he said, quote: The Crown Minerals Act provides the legislative framework for the granting and acquiring of all rights to interests in Crown minerals. We would like to know exactly what is meant by,

quote, acquiring all rights to interests in Crown minerals.

The Bill also provides for the use of an average price in the determination of natural gas royalties to simplify natural gas royalty calculation and reporting procedures. I hope the new policy initiative being added to the regulations-making section is similar to that which Alberta recently introduced.

The minister stated earlier that his department has been working closely with oil and gas industry to determine if administration could be simplified in Saskatchewan by using an average rather than actual prices received to determine natural gas royalties. He indicated that a decision on this matter, quote, will be made within the next few months, end quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what is the purpose of passing legislation previous to coming to a conclusion or a conclusion with respect to . . . that may be satisfactory to all parties involved. After all, what happens if the final decision of on-average prices is that it's not in the best interests for Saskatchewan? Then is the minister's answer too late? Well it's already law, so it might be too late. So we don't want to get the cart before the horse.

There are many, many other questions that we have regarding the legislation, Mr. Speaker, and we need time to consult further with those affected. Therefore I would adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

(1100)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 46 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

The Chair: — Before we proceed to clause 1, I would ask the minister responsible for the Wascana Centre to please introduce the official who has joined us here today.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. I'd like to introduce today Mr. Blair Paterson, the executive director of Wascana Centre Authority.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, the first question I would like to ask is what is the real intent or the purpose of this Bill? I think we've been told in times past that it's almost an ongoing, traditional thing that this legislation be brought forward. I'm wondering if you could bring us up to date as to the purpose and the intent and the reason for the Bill being before the Assembly today.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's just a simple Bill to authorize the expenditure.

Mr. Toth: — Expenditure of what? And what sum are you talking of here, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's because the Authority is under its own Act is why we have to bring this forward in this way. And what the Act essentially says, that the government should pay a statutory amount every year.

Now what's been happening is as there's been some decline in ability to pay the same amount every year and a reduction in what flows through to the Wascana Centre Authority, the Bill is brought back every year to reflect those changes in funding and those reductions in funding.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying then, Madam Minister, is that Wascana Centre Authority gets all their funding through government, through the general revenue pool?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's three partners in the funding agreement of Wascana Centre Authority. There's the Government of Saskatchewan, the city of Regina, and the University of Regina. And what it really represents is all of the major facilities and institutions that have their home within the Wascana Centre area and made an agreement to be collectively responsible for the parks and lands and upkeep and improvements in the shared area of the park.

The Government of Saskatchewan . . . the total budget from the Government of Saskatchewan is \$2.422 million; from the city of Regina, 1.132 million; and the University of Regina, 462,000 — reflecting the relationship of the amount of park area represented by their interest.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, what has the funding been doing in the last little while? You indicated, just to . . . response just a few moments ago, that one of the reasons for the legislation or this Bill being brought up on a yearly basis is because of the redress of funding.

I would take from that then that the province itself has been basically reducing its funding. And I'm wondering if you could indicate what kind of reductions would the centre have seen in provincial funding over the last three years. And as well, Madam Minister, how has that affected the U of R (University of Regina) and the city then, and the Wascana Centre Authority in general, with the reductions from the province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll start out by saying that everybody has experienced . . . all three partners have experienced some reduction. The government has gone from in 1991-92 from 2,923,900 to 2,422 in 1995-96. But I will point out for interest that it has stabilized. In 1994-95 and 1995-96 have been at the same level, so we feel now that we've been able to stabilize this funding at this level and hopefully look to improvements in the future.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. In your discussions with the centre, I'm sure they've indicated to you what effects this has had. What has the centre done, to your knowledge, to address the decrease in funding? How have they addressed it? What generally you have seen in the past is the government has offloaded and then passed on reductions to

other centres.

Certainly jobs have been . . . it's had a major impact on jobs. It would have an impact in the city of Regina as far as the number of people employed because the Wascana Centre Authority and the Wascana Centre . . . For that matter, Madam Minister, something that I think the city of Regina has taken a lot of pride in, the fact that this legislature is sitting in the Wascana area. And certainly the park is an area you see a lot of people utilizing, not only in the summertime, but even in the wintertime as they do their running or exercises. But in the summertime, you see all kinds of people here.

And I think it's not only important to be budget conscious, but it's well as important to understand how people are affected and realize what is happening through this funding. And I guess what I would like to say . . . I don't know if the government has any input as to how the dollars are spent, whether it's job related or whether there are other areas that maybe the . . . that the government can bring forward as suggestions, as maybe if you use the money in this area at this matter, you might be able to save a job on the other side. Is there any reflection in that part, and in a general way, how has this affected not only the funding, but the employment in the Wascana Centre Authority over the past three years?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the main impacts of the decline in funding has really been in the area of new developments. One of the principles in the legislation was always that there would be continued new development within the park — you know, there would be new boardwalks, new paths, new structures within the park facility.

So what has had to happen over the last few years is to really pay more attention to upkeep and less to new development. And that has had an impact on staffing. The summer total has gone from 141 in 1987-88 to 87 in 1995-96. And the winter, year around, has gone from 40 in '87-88 to 21 in '95-96.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, you have cut the staffing by close to 50 per cent, both summer and winter, and I believe as you look around Wascana Park you can see that that cut has been in effect.

There's certainly in some areas, a deterioration of the park. In particular I'm thinking of the roadways along the western side of the lake over here. Not only is that particular stretch of road in very poor shape, Madam Minister, it's also a safety hazard — a safety hazard for the vehicles that are on it and even more so, a safety hazard for the joggers that are on it. This particular stretch of road is particularly winding and including . . . The chairman has a great concern about that because sometimes he does both, drive and jog on it.

So, Madam Minister, I believe that is one area that needs to be addressed within the Wascana Park Authority, is that particular stretch of winding road that's in bad shape. The road itself needs to be repaired. But there also needs to be a jogging path built along that side so that the joggers have some place in

which to exercise, in which to run, without doing it on the road. Because vehicles, as they come around the corners on that particular stretch, if it's a little bit icy and a jogger is coming from the other direction, the jogger isn't going to win if they happen to be at the same spot at the same time, Madam Minister. So I believe there's a safety hazard there that needs to be addressed.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the things I guess I would comment on, on the jogging paths, is I have jogged myself through there, and there are paths. But a lot of joggers are probably like me. They like to go as the crow flies rather than following the winding paths that go through the park. So there are paths there; it's really a question of whether people use them or not.

The tender will be in the paper shortly for the road improvement, and it's now SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) who handles that area, so you will shortly see a tender for the road improvements there, and we hope they'll be completed by July 1.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister, we're pleased to hear that, although I do have a concern on the jogging path over on there. I'm not sure that there is actually a path there for the joggers. When you look out on the grass there as you drive around, there are ruts in there where people have been running and walking, but I don't believe that there is any upgraded path on that particular area along the west side of the lake between the Legislative Building and the lake, Madam Minister, past the tennis courts there. So I believe that area is one of the areas where there needs to be some investigation and some improvements made in that.

So, Madam Minister, since we're talking about new projects, is there any funds within the current budget structure to allow for some improvements and some upgrading, some new projects for the Wascana Park?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's no brand-new projects this year. We are looking at a longer development plan. The only significant work that would be done this year is promenade repair on the north side of the lake. I was going to mention, if you want to take a walk one day, we can go around the park, and you can point out the areas. I think there are small pieces missing here and there, but quite often the joggers are keeping to the outer perimeter, and a lot of the pathway goes closer to the lake.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I have the minister concerned for my health and wants to take me jogging and lose a little weight, and the Minister for Education wants to take me for supper and add some on to me, so I think the ministers here need to get together on whether I should put on weight or lose it.

An Hon. Member: — That seems clear enough, Dan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, well I think so also, Mr. Minister.

Madam Minister, you say that there are no new projects in the works for this year. There is some maintenance on the promenade. You mentioned there was going to be some possible road construction by SPMC. So there's no added . . . no real new projects within the system, which is what part of the mandate for Wascana Park is and what the budgets are for. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that's correct, and it's not a circumstance that we're happy about, but it's one that's been a condition of meeting our deficit objectives within government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In the changing in your budgets, what would you say the effect of reduction in funding has been, due to inflation and the other rising costs, that the centre's funding formula when it was first suspended in 1986-87?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would just have to venture a guess. Inflation's been running at about 2 to 3 per cent, so that would be the amount of impact.

(1115)

Mr. D'Autremont: — So there's a fairly large cumulative effect over the years. I believe the funding formula was suspended in '86-87. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that's correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Since that time, Madam Minister, what kind of new projects have been built into the system since the funding formula was changed?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Very little.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, well thank you, Madam Minister, I guess the evidence is self-evident.

Madam Minister, you talked about a . . . in your second reading speech, a national capital cities workshop was mentioned. Just how is the Wascana Centre going to be involved in that event? Are we going to actually have it here, or what's the procedures? What's happening with that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The city of Regina is involved in hosting the next conference of course. It's the second; the first was held in Ottawa. And it was really because of the cooperation between the city and the government that the mayor was able to attract this conference to Regina, to demonstrate the cooperation that's taking place between the city, the government, and the Wascana . . . the university and Wascana Centre Authority.

I think to have the kind of plan that we have in Wascana Centre Authority is a fairly rare and special kind of project. And so we're quite pleased that being only the second year of the conference, that they're holding it in Regina this time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to go back a little bit to the funding of the Wascana Centre. You've got 80-some employees in the summertime; 21, I believe you said, in the winter. I notice their vehicles running around; they've got a number of buildings within the centre here. What added burden on the Wascana Centre has the increases in the natural gas prices, the SaskPower prices, telephone, those other prices that government has added to all our lives, what impact has that had on the Wascana Centre Authority?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We're not able to give you a specific figure on that, but it has been accounted for and built into the budget adjustments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Would it be an estimated 10 per cent increase in their cost to the centre, 15, 20 per cent? What would it be? And what has the centre had to do to offset those additional costs because there's no added money into the system?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm advised that under the existing budget it would be a fraction of a per cent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What has the impact been on the centre though? What have they had to adjust to account for those increases?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The largest amount of costs within the centre are labour. So really these other things, where they may have like what we said, a fraction of a per cent impact, they're really not as significant as other things would be in impact on total budget. Labour is really the main cost.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and her officials for coming in today and for answering the questions.

Bill No. 40 — An Act to amend The Land Surveys Act

The Chair: — I will ask the Minister responsible for Property Management Corporation to introduce her officials to the members of the committee.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. With me today is John Turnbull, general manager, central survey and mapping, SPMC; and directly behind me, Leslie Krug, legislative officer, SPMC.

And I'd also like to mention that in the gallery with us today from the Saskatchewan Land Surveyors' Association are Murray Skelton, executive director — did you want to stand, Murray — and Dan Babiuk, and Ed Desnoyers, members of the new Act committee, and thank them for joining us today.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and her officials today as we go through the committee stage of Bill 40 and 41.

I don't have a great number of questions, Madam Minister. Obviously this stuff is fairly technical in its application and I'm simply going to refer to a few areas where I'm more curious than anything as to why certain things were done.

One that struck me, being a farmer and being used to survey stakes and all that sort of thing, the definition and terminology of iron post in the Act. Could your official have you explain to us why you spent some time in defining iron post and the definition surrounding it.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I guess in the old Act the term used was monuments, which referred to metal or wooden posts. And there was an intent in the new Act to really set a standard for what these would be like so that there was a consistency, and to reflect what's actually there. And really it's just a matter of setting a standard so that there's a clear expectation of what these posts are like.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I appreciate that, Madam Minister. I would have thought that we could have come up with something a little more in tune with the '90s or the next century rather than iron post. It just seemed a little archaic to me when we're redefining a Bill after this amount of time that we didn't sort of . . .

Because yes, there are ways and means I think in the future for us to do surveying that will be way beyond what we've done today. You can pinpoint spots with a satellite today and determine where your position is that you never could before. In fact I'm probably going to invest in a computer program for my farming operation this spring which will use aerial photographs to actually give me the definite image and outline of my particular fields, which I will need for my registered-seed operation, because you have to have it down to a decimal place.

But you can actually use an aerial photograph, both black and white and infrared, from 20,000 feet, and put it into your computer and actually have that image reproduced, or superimposed onto your field patterns, which is way beyond anything that we've ever done in surveying before.

And I just wonder if people have thought about what processes will be in place in the future when we're doing things like surveying and defining. Because there's a cost implication. I just recently had a piece of land subdivided. I was lucky I was able to do it by metes and bounds; but if I hadn't been able to use metes and bounds, there was a fairly stiff price attached to separating 41 acres from a quarter section. And you're finding more and more of this happening as people become even more cost conscious with various parcels of land.

And if we can use computer images and if we can do other

things, then it would seem that we should be prepared in the legislation to deal with those types of things so that we keep costs relative to what we're actually trying to accomplish, rather than inflating costs because of all the fees that go along with it.

Today when you do a separation, you have to have five or six Crown corporations comment on whether it's suitable or not, and there's fees that can be charged all the way through the system. So an operator who says I'm going to subdivide off this particular parcel, for one reason or another, is then faced with a whole host of economic costs that might not be necessary if there was an easier way, through legislation, for this to be handled.

And I'm just wondering if your officials have covered that off, with the changing realities of 1995 and beyond.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess the short answer is that the new technologies create efficiencies in establishing where the monuments are, but don't remove the need for the monuments themselves. They would really be more of an aid in establishing those boundaries and making it, I guess, simpler to resolve those kinds of questions than perhaps it has been in the past.

But people don't see the immediate demise of the monument as an on-the-ground aid to determining where property lines are.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I would hope that there is some thought put into some of the technological advances that are happening. I think you'll see agriculture dramatically change in the next while, and if we are saddled with outdated legislation and cost regimes, people will not move ahead as quickly as they should in order to stay current.

I am wondering why, in the Bill . . . it used to be there was a reference to the Department of Supply and Services throughout and in a number of sections. Those have been deleted and you do not refer to SPMC, which is a successor agency. And I'm wondering why that hasn't happened, because that is the government agency that traditionally would have been the one in those sections. Is there any reason for that?

(1130)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Although there's no specific reference to SPMC, there is reference to the Controller of Surveys and the Central Survey and Mapping Agency which are agencies within SPMC but referred to more specifically rather than more generically as SPMC.

Mr. Swenson: — Well it may be a small point, Madam Minister, but at some point here I think when we do legislation you like to make sure that the chain of command for responsibility is clearly outlined.

Very difficult for members of the House, for the public, when questioning your budgetary process to not . . . I mean if you don't have it clearly defined of where ultimate responsibility lies with a piece of legislation, then some member of the public

or a surveying company, or whoever, quite frankly runs into useless red tape and a tracking process that isn't well defined.

And it doesn't make sense for you not to say in your legislation, if central mapping services have been part of Supply and Services for generations, if SPMC is the successor to that, that you would not want to have that clearly defined that central mapping is with SPMC and away you go — it's not with Urban Affairs, or it's not here, there, or the next place. And it would make sense to me that you'd want to do that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I guess in the intricacies of government . . . I'll do my best here. This really has to do with the responsibility for The Land Surveys Act being under the minister, myself, who is responsible for this particular piece of legislation. But it's not SPMC themselves that are responsible for it; they provide some services to it.

In future SPMC may or may not continue to provide those, but the Act remains with the minister as opposed to with the department. And thereby if some change was to occur, it wouldn't necessitate revising the Act in that regard.

Mr. Swenson: — Would you explain how the Act stays with a minister rather than with a department? Like ministers come and go and responsibility . . . The minister of SPMC then is . . . this stays with the minister of SPMC, or the minister of what?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now again this may be a little bit tricky to understand, but there's a group of Acts. There's five Acts which are grouped under whichever minister is responsible for those functions that are contained within the Act.

At this current time it is the minister of SPMC who is responsible. That's not written in stone, but the fact that the Acts are grouped and attached to where those services reside, that is the important connection between them.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay, I have one further question. The manual that's used to determine certain policies and things that you do — there's a reference in the Bill that the instruction manual from Highways and Transportation is to be moved to The Land Surveys Act. Yet in both of the new clauses in the Bill, there is still references to The Highways and Transportation Act. And I'm wondering why you would keep it in both places. If you're moving it, you're moving it; if you're not, you're not — I mean why the references both ways?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is really a matter of I guess splitting of responsibilities. The road right of ways that are required by the province, in the provincial highway Act they have to register the plans under their Act, but all the expertise regarding the legal survey and what not is in CSMA (Central Survey and Mapping Agency), and therefore the manual has been moved to the Controller of Surveys. The function in Highways is really just a registration function.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to make a few comments about Bill 41. First, I want to emphasize that

the Acts governing professional associations in general are very important for the protection of the public, the professions, and those directly involved in the professions.

Changes indicated within Bill No. 41, we assume the purpose of the changes contained within the Bill are designed to ensure . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Bill 41 is next on the list to be called, I believe. It's Bill 40 is what's before us at this moment.

An Hon. Member: — This isn't The Land Surveyors and Professional Surveyors Act?

The Chair: — No. Before us right now it's the — they're easily confused — this is the Act to amend The Land Surveys Act.

An Hon. Member: — We weren't sure either . . .

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 41 — An Act respecting Land Surveyors and Professional Surveyors

The Chair: — I believe the officials are the same officials. There's one new official, so I'll ask that the minister introduce the additional officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd like to welcome Susan Amrud, Crown solicitor, Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mrs Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials. We assumed that the purposes of the changes contained within Bill 41 are designed to insure that the association can fulfil its mandate, and in that regard, I notice the specific changes contained within the Bill are sections dealing with the educational format and the provision which will allow professionals to join on a voluntary basis if they so decide.

As well we recognize that there are many professional categories within the surveyor's profession and that this is due to the progression of new and advanced technology, therefore it seems logical to give these professionals the opportunity to join on a voluntary basis.

We see these components as important and of a non-controversial nature and deserving of this Assembly's support. Through our research it has been stated to us that The Land Surveyors and Professional Surveyors Act is designed to keep the Saskatchewan Land Surveyors' Association up to date and in a position to enter into the 21st century with an appropriate mandate to fulfil their role.

In this regard, we have no objection and will be supportive. However, as it relates to the government's role in dealing with professional associations and the consultative process, I have a number of questions to put forward.

Section 9(8) states:

The association shall remunerate and reimburse for expenses the member of the council appointed pursuant to this section at the rate determined by by-law.

Why is the association required to pay for the government's appointee?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As you will know, it's not consistent from every Act to take this approach, but part of the responsibility as a self-governing body is to be able to assure good conduct in a range of areas. And it's felt that it's to their benefit to have a person on their committee that will increase public confidence in terms of issues like their by-laws and other types of legal activities that are undertaken, discipline, activities that are undertaken by their body.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. We've been told by the association that the government . . . they were told that the government wants to keep uniformity throughout its legislation regarding Acts affecting professions. Therefore they were told that the land surveyors association would have to pay the government's appointee. Is that true?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Rather than the uniformity being across government, it's uniform within the body of similar Acts that would be in the same kind of professional area that this is.

Mrs. Bergman: — Can you tell me how that's determined, and why one area would have the association paying for the appointee and why others wouldn't?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is really a matter that's been determined on a departmental basis where the departments have the authority to make the decision here, so there is no government-wide approach to this particular question.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Minister. I guess the question comes up because the association understood it to be across the government. And I may have to address that question elsewhere.

Minister, the land surveyors association is concerned that you will appoint a person that will have to travel a long distance to meetings and therefore will create large expenses for the association to pay. What assurances can you give that this won't happen?

(1145)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They will have a role in making that decision, so this wouldn't be made arbitrarily without them.

Mrs. Bergman: — Okay. That I'm sure will reassure them.

The association originally requested that the minister reply or respond within 60 days, and what the regulation says is 90 days. Why was it chosen as 90 days rather than 60?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well this is one area where we've achieved consistency. There is a standard of 90 days, and it's really thought to give the time needed for consultation.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you for answering my questions, Minister, and thank you to your . . .

Mr. Swenson: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions, Madam Minister, on this. I, you know, realize that this is a . . . the approach that this professional organization has taken to upgrade themselves in their own policing, and how to expand a sort of public perception of what they do.

I'm wondering if you could just give me briefly some of the real key issues that they felt necessitated a change after 30 years. There's obviously some flashpoints occurring with the public that they wanted to make sure did not get any worse than what they were, and if you could just give me a couple of examples of what those were.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I could summarize them and then if you need more detail . . . It would be improved by law-making powers, improved discipline process, complaints more clearly . . . more clear investigative and hearing roles, more options for penalties, a greater ability to deal with incompetence, and then adding public representation to the council.

So, it's really just tightening up the whole conduct and ability to implement the conduct of the organization and its professionals.

Mr. Swenson: — Have you any indication of what that public component will look like? Have they given you any indication to the type of individual or individuals that they prefer to see part and parcel of the count?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Not at this time, no.

Mr. Swenson: — Do you have any words of wisdom for this group, seeing as they came to you for the legislative enactment, as to who should be represented by a public component?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think in light of the kinds of objectives they're trying to achieve with this Act, it would really be a matter of discussion what kind of person would be most useful to them in conducting that, whether it's a legal person or a technical person. It would really be a matter of discussion.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 53 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 46 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be read a third time and passed under its title, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 40 — An Act to amend The Land Surveys Act

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I move that this Bill be read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 41 — An Act respecting Land Surveyors and Professional Surveyors

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I move that this Bill be read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

The Chair: — I will ask — this was just recently before the committee — are there any new officials with the minister today that have not been introduced previously?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the only official that has not been introduced previously in the number of times we've been before the committee is Lois Borden, who is seated directly behind me, executive director of district support branch.

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, back at the beginning of March, I believe it was March 6, I asked you a number of questions pertaining to number of beds and issues in Moose Jaw surrounding hospitals — Providence Place, I believe Pioneer Lodge — and you were going to get back to me. And I know I've sent you a couple of written reminders besides since then. Are you prepared at this time to answer those questions?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I do have the information for the member and we will provide it to him in written form right away.

You asked the exact number of beds and how the beds were

going to work out in the Moose Jaw context. This is as of March 8 of this month . . . at the time of asking. There were at that point 355 level 3 and level 4 long-term care beds in Moose Jaw. On May 31, 1995, once Providence Place opens, there will be a minimum of 354 level 3 and 4 long-term care beds in Moose Jaw. I don't have them broken down in front of me here, the distribution, but we'll get that.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you're doing that, would you please provide me the current staffing levels as of the opening of Providence Place that will correspond with the various units and the beds. Is that within your ability to do?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, to be sure, we will get the exact numbers from the district. I'll just add to the information that I provided the member. I do have the breakdown here now.

In Providence hospital and St. Anthony's combined, on March 8 there were 167. On May 31, anticipation date of opening of Providence Place, there will be 160 long-term care plus the 28 geriatric assessment beds.

Extendicare remains the same at 127 beds over at Extendicare, and in Pioneer Lodge on May 8, there were 50 level 3 and 4; it's anticipated May 31, there will be 60 in Pioneer.

(1200)

Mr. Swenson: — Minister, during a debate that we had a little earlier, we were talking about shifting emphasis at Pioneer. Now you're telling me it's going from 50 to 60 when the indication there is that there's going to actually be a reduction in the number of beds and that they're going to a different concept; that there's a whole area there that's going to be cleaned out and will become a common area. How can you possibly indicate that there's going to be more beds there when staff and board members are indicating that there's going to be a total change there?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just to be clear, the 50 to 60 indicates the level 3 and 4 beds; there will be fewer of the level 1 and 2 that have been the traditional beds at Pioneer. What's increasing at Pioneer are the beds, level 3 and 4, and it's going from 50, and it's projected 60.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay, do you have the numbers there of what the current numbers are then? Tell me where you're going currently from down to this 60.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, to be absolutely accurate, we don't have the exact numbers in the House, but we'll get them. And I commit we'll get them very soon.

Mr. Swenson: — I ask these questions, Minister, because I continue to have people in the community almost daily posing questions to me about what's going on. There seems to be . . . there are rumours of significant budget deficits in place. There are conflicting numbers of staff lay-offs almost on a weekly basis. It seems to gyrate around anywhere from 25 to 75,

depending on who you're talking to.

And the ongoing speculation about budget deficits, tied to the speculation about staff lay-offs, has meant that there's a great deal of uncertainty in the community, and we're rushing ahead pell-mell to an opening of a new facility, and all of the rest of this stuff is all hanging in abeyance. And I don't think it's particularly good for morale, number one. But it leaves serious concerns in the minds of the public as to what exactly they're going to have at their disposal when it comes to acute care and particularly level 3 and 4 beds.

And that's the reason I asked the question, because it is very bothersome to an awful lot of people, Minister. And I hope that you can clarify in absolutely a definite way what those staffing positions, those budget positions, those budget deficit positions, and the number of beds it's going to be, so that some of the speculation which is just absolutely tearing the morale out of the community as far as the workers are concerned, is put to rest.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I agree with the member when he talks about the number of rumours that exist in the Moose Jaw community. As he will understand, I'm regularly confronted with many of the same rumours — and rumours many of them are. And as someone wiser than I once said, a rumour is halfway around the world before truth gets out of bed.

Now I will again share with the member, because one of the rumours that I hear on a more or less regular basis is that there will be significantly, significantly number of beds less in the new Providence Place than are currently being occupied in the two other facilities. I get this rumour at all times. In fact I heard a very dramatic rumour about that just the other day.

And so I'll just again, for the record, indicate that on March 8 of this year there were 355 level 3 and 4 beds in the two existing facilities, Providence and St. Anthony's. At the end of May, when we expect Providence Place will be opened, there will be a minimum of 354 level 3. So that's in essence a one-bed difference there.

The staffing levels, these are of course determined by the district and their administration. I think there has been some more recent clarity through the press in Moose Jaw about what the exact consequences of the amalgamation of the buildings will be, and there has been some clarification I think locally, about the exact numbers of people that will be laid off. Another group of that staff, as we know, will see some of their hours reduced. But I'm pleased to see that some clarity now is emerging around that issue in the local community, because it too was subject to quite a series of rumours.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, the last time we had the privilege of being able to discuss some of the issues with you — and we've done it a couple of times in question period — we've raised the question of personal care homes and the requests that have come forward from a number

of areas and individuals who are looking at possibly licensing personal care homes.

And this past week you did make an announcement . . . issued a press release that actually didn't have a lot of information in it. But now I've received a letter from you, just bringing forward two options that . . . your suggestion that . . . or suggesting that you'll be looking at, or the department will be following as they review the request for personal care homes.

And I guess the thing I would like to raise with you this afternoon, I'd like some clarifications, because I know as people have heard the announcement, will receive the news release, there are a number of unanswered questions that are out there.

And we'll look at the, basically the Avonlea proposal, that's looking at roughly a 40-bed unit; bring to your attention the Antler Creek care home, personal care home in the Wawota area, where they were approved for four beds. Because at that time the level of individuals in a home couldn't exceed 10 and the family members were six, so four was their approval. And they would like to increase it to eight.

And I'm wondering if this announcement you're making will allow that process to take place. I don't know, but we could . . . It's an area that I think we need to discuss so we find out where we're going in the whole program and process of this evolution, if you will, in health care as individuals strive to meet some of the needs out there.

Number one, the announcements that you made the other day, how will this affect the presentation of the proposal that has been brought forward from the community of Avonlea for a, and I'm just reflecting back, I believe it was a 40-care bed that they're looking at constructing. I'm wondering if you could bring us up to date.

And if as well, if the department has contacted the folk from Avonlea regarding the changes, and to let them know and to see whether or not the announcement you made the other day and the proposals or the changes, whether they . . . how they will affect them; whether or not it will help them or aid them in their pursuit of a centre or a place that would meet the needs of the elderly in their community.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, without being entirely specific to an Avonlea situation, I can report to the member that I know that departmental officials have been in conversation and in contact already with the community.

In terms of providing a residential option for seniors in our communities that would be beyond the small personal care home but to look at larger residential options, and I think we've talked about the large option — more traditional — but also we want to look at what I think could be a very exciting concept. And that's the matter of apartment-style living but with some supports within a complex to add just that little extra support that some will feel is necessary and for some it will be necessary to maintain independent living on a 24-hour basis.

Now in terms of the circumstance where there is an existing personal care home that may have four residents and they may want to expand to eight, the restrictions under the regulations and Act indicate that if there are more than 10 persons resident under the roof, if it exceeds more than 10 — and that may be a combination of residents being cared for plus family members or others — if the total number exceeds 10, then the institutional standards, National Building Code and other institutional standards, must apply, which are very stringent and rigid standards.

So in the circumstance if there is a personal care home that has four clients or four residents and they would wish to expand that to eight; if their total number of residents under the roof including care-givers did not exceed 10, then that would be possible under the current and continuing regulation and Act. If it exceeds 10, then they move into the area of institutional standards set nationally.

And so in describing the kind of residential option that would have more than 10, we've tried to be very clear in identifying the kind of very stringent requirements that are there. The first being the building code requirements and to meet the national and institutional standards.

We would also, before any possibility of licensing, would want to see a very sound and demonstrably sound business and financial plan to protect . . . and some of the discussion we've had earlier in the House about this, I indicated our concern about the security of residents in the future and financial viability. And so we will require that a bond be posted to protect residents.

We will want to be sure that there are safe standards, even in this kind of residential situation, that there are safe standards of operation, and that any plans be done in conjunction with the district boards, so that there is consultation in conjunction on the local level.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Now, Mr. Minister, you've gone through about five different points — actually raised the scenario of two options that you're presenting to communities. And I appreciate the fact that you talk about apartment-style living because I think there is an opportunity for that in a community.

One community in particular is the community of Kipling, that actually built what was a low cost housing unit kind of an apartment-style complex a few years ago to meet a housing need. It's now turned into kind of a seniors . . . it was a seniors low income and a senior centre. The unfortunate part is that, I would say personally, is that they didn't make the common area just a little larger and put a kitchen in it because it would certainly speed up and enhance the home care program that's there.

For one thing when a home care worker comes to that complex, then they have a number of clients that are already there. They're not driving around the community and around the

surrounding area. The other thing, it would just even make the meals on wheels program work that much better if you had someone that you could hire to go in and cook that meal right on site. It would just make it . . . rather than, you know, trying to run to the hospital or the present care home and pick up meals and deliver them, it certainly would meet a need.

So I think, Mr. Minister, I commend the department for looking at that, and taking a look at it in the broad spectrum because I believe that there certainly is a real option out there, especially as we look at the home care program.

And the fact that even though you've announced, it's about three weeks ago now, the increase in funding for home care, the fact is for the demand out there, that that is barely scratching the surface. And this is one way of home care expanding and providing the services without . . . and possibly holding some of the costs in line.

And in view of that, I just want to also acknowledge that while I attended a funeral of a cousin who wasn't that old unfortunately, yesterday I stopped by to see a step-aunt who's dying of cancer; and this happens to be in Gimli, Manitoba. And the interesting thing there I found, Mr. Minister, well she is in her home. The home care program in that community is now providing 24-hour service and care because of the fact that she really can't look after herself and she's deteriorated to that point.

And I don't know if that type of service is available here. And I look at a few people even in my area, we've raised a couple questions regarding that. What happens when a person gets to the point of needing a fair bit of care, or actually basically 24-hour care. Is it the ability for home care there right now to address that need?

And maybe what I'll do is allow you to respond to this before I move into the other area a little further. Otherwise we'll have a lot of questions, then I'll have to get up and ask again because trying to remember all the questions I've put forward might be difficult. So maybe you'd like to respond on that, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, one of the, what I believe is very exciting pieces of news out of this year's budget — the budget that we're now under debate — is to provide to home- and community-based services an additional \$20 million which will have a significant impact on the level of home-based and community-based services that we're able to provide.

With this additional funding our districts . . . most of which funding now of course just begins April 1; it comes with the new budget — and there's a period of time when the districts work with their budgets to work out the kind of enhancements to programming.

One of the areas identified in that 20 million — 20.6 million — was an ability to provide some 24-hour home care service. This will not provide for 24-hour home care on an extended period of time, not for months, but in circumstances where it seemed

to be appropriate on a shorter-term basis — and this may well be for the kind of situation you describe. We believe that this money, this budget, will allow the districts to be able to provide that very valuable service.

It is a service, too, that's often needed in an emergency or an emergent kind of a situation. If someone for instance has been released from a hospital bed, they no longer require the acute care, intensive acute care, but perhaps will require some heavy level . . . more heavy level of care at home than they would through the ordinary home care program, that some 24-hour home care could be available for the first few days and so on to provide to that need.

(1215)

Another benefit of the initiatives and enhancements in this year's budget, between now and July 1, we're going to be working with all the districts to look at ways which we can reduce some of the home care fees. If we took it globally, we expect that fees should be reduced on an average or on a global basis by about 17 per cent as a result of this budget. The goal being to make those services accessible, as accessible as we can, to individuals and to be sure there's no financial barrier, as best we can, to somebody receiving those service.

And so just to go back, I think, then to your original comment, and I appreciate, if I may say, I appreciate your earlier comments about some of the directions we're moving in in community-based care and some of the concept of some supportive — residential supportive — living, but on the specific of home care, I will . . . I can say today it's . . . it will be available. It will be okay for sort of periodic nursing as the need is there, not over a long period of time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I appreciate the acknowledgement of some of the comments I made regarding the apartment-like style housing. It's unfortunate, Mr. Minister, one doesn't always like to give out some of the ideas that they feel could be really beneficial, especially to what individuals you might term your foe when it comes to the largesse of the political arena.

But at the same time, we also like to acknowledge . . . I think it's the responsibility of members in this Assembly not only to raise points of concern but also to point out areas that you feel we could address some of the impact and some of the concerns, both in the urban and to a large extent in the rural communities, as to how we meet the needs of individuals in our communities.

So I'm pleased to see that this initiative has been undertaken. And I don't think any one of us would indicate, well this is probably the be-all and the end-all. It's probably something that will develop over time, as we've seen other measures taken within health care. Although certainly some of the cuts to a lot of the hospitals in rural Saskatchewan, that's going to take awhile yet to conquer some of the areas of concern.

When it comes to the private care homes and personal care

homes, you mentioned five areas that will need to be addressed or met before an individual or community is given the licence to then develop or build an extended care home.

You mentioned demonstrating feasibility with a sound business plan, meet all building code requirements, post a bond to protect the security of residents, meet standards for safe operation, and work in consultation with the district health board.

I guess a couple of questions come out of that. Number one, was a bond necessary prior to this being brought forward?

And number two, how does this fit in line with the working of the personal care home or the private care home that is put basically in place at Yellow Grass that Carol Krieger is now operating? Would a lot of these suggestions here already be in place and have been addressed by that care home?

And as well, what consultative process was undertaken before these recommendations were brought forward? Did you talk to people who have . . . not only in the health field, but in the private sector care home business, about these suggestions? And was there a unanimity amongst individuals in developing and working with the department in developing these proposals?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, there has not been a process of any bonding or requirement of a bond or posting of a bond to this point. It is something we do see as important for the protection of those who will make their homes in the . . . if any are licensed — that those who would make their homes would have this protection.

Those which exist, the larger personal care homes, have been simply already sort of grandfathered or grandmothered into the current circumstances, so no new restrictions would be applied retroactively. These will apply to those who would make new application.

And in terms of consultation, in October last year there was a large consultation; I think about a hundred different stakeholders or stakeholder groups brought together. The views of that consultation were not unanimous. Some did not feel that this would be the appropriate way to proceed, and I know that there is some debate, so I wouldn't want to suggest that there's been unanimous, by any means, unanimous consensus on these issues.

Consultation has gone on in this House with meetings with individuals, through a fair bit of correspondence that I've received as minister from the public.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, regarding the bond, what size . . . or what is the department foreseeing may be constituted the size of a bond that could be required? And does the department . . . I shouldn't say does the department . . . it would seem to me that a bond may be an area that would be somewhat restrictive to any community or any individual attempting to build a private

care home. That might just be the thing that breaks the camel's back on whether a project proceeds. All the other requirements, they might be able to fit into fairly easy.

And so I'm just wondering what you're anticipating would be the size or how would that bond be achieved? How would you look at making sure that bond is in place? Is it a something that becomes a monetary burden? Well what specifically are you looking at to address that question?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we've not settled precisely. We'll be looking at a posting of a bond that would cover the operations for a period of somewhere between 6 and 12 months, simply to provide that level of consumer protection to the individuals who might be there.

Now I think the process of consumer protection bond is related very closely to the process of demonstrating the feasibility and the business plan. If the feasibility is there and a solid business plan, I don't think the bonding would be a big issue. If there's not a feasible business plan, then I think it's going to be very difficult to get a bond. So what we're looking at is a period of operations of about 6 to 12 months.

Mr. Toth: — That's quite true, Mr. Minister, and I was going to raise that one question: if all the other conditions are met and now the fact when you put a proposal forward you're also going to have to face the fact that . . . establishing a bond. What I would like to know and I think the public would like to know as well is, what do you anticipate the cost of that bond then being to the . . . because that's going to have to be included in a proposal that is brought forward.

And as you indicated, that you really haven't established that yet, but you must have an idea of what type of a cost would be incurred by a group or an individual as they make a proposal and as they look at beginning to operate a private care home — what this additional condition would mean to their proposal and to running that facility.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, this I think will vary significantly on the proposal that's being made. To cover the costs of operations in a 6 to 12 month period and therefore to offer that high level of consumer protection — and because here we're very often talking about seniors, we think that consumer protection is a very important issue — the size of that will of course depend on the operational budget which will depend on the numbers of people, the levels of service that might be offered in this residence, and sort of the overall overhead that they're going to undertake.

So I'm afraid I can't give you a very specific answer. I think each application that may or may not come forward will be different, given the kinds of services that would be provided within this kind of residential option.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I realize that it's difficult to look at a project in general, but would there be a rough idea of what it may be per patient or per bed in a care home. Like you may

have a proposal come forward for a 15-bed unit, you may have a proposal coming forward for a 25- or a 40-bed unit, and on that basis it may be difficult and I can appreciate it would be difficult to determine what that level of bond would be. But do you have an idea of what it may be per patient? And maybe you could explain that a little more when you're looking at it. Per patient, how is that bond established?

Let's say a private care home is up and running, and they're charging a patient a fee of \$1,150 a month — and I don't know if that's feasible; I'm just throwing out a number. Is that bond established based on the charge, the fee that that patient would pay for that service on a monthly basis. Or is that based on the actual cost of the service? How is that bond established and would the department have an idea of what they might perceive as being the actual cost per patient?

Because a community or an individual placing a request or putting forward a proposal will need to know these types of numbers to determine what their actual cost is going to be at the end of the day, so they can do their business plan before they determine whether or not they would proceed.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, as I understand it, the bond . . . and again it will be related to the business plan. The feasibility plan would show what the overhead costs are going to be, what the monthly resident charges would be. And we want this bond in place.

It's essentially insurance. It's essentially consumer protection so that if, even with the best business plan in the world, something goes wrong and the community ownership or the individual ownership has to cease business, that there be that bond in place to protect those seniors — and they most likely will be seniors — for a period so that the operational cost can be borne for a period of at least six months, perhaps six up to twelve.

So it is related, as you say, to what ongoing costs would be to maintain the residential care for those resident in the personal care home.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, maybe we can pursue that a little more as we get more details or as you have more details about the program and as we get into it.

A question I would have, Mr. Minister, regarding this announcement made and the letter that you sent me — and I appreciate that — regarding the conditions: now once the conditions are met or a proposal comes forward and basically meets all the requirements of the conditions you've laid here, who makes the decision then to proceed or to allow . . . I guess first of all you'd have to proceed with the licensing. And then you would proceed into that community, or that individual then would proceed if they don't already have a house that's large enough and they want to refurbish to accommodate individuals . . . some would be looking at building structures.

Who gives the permit or the final approval or notice to proceed? Is that the board? Is that a local . . . the district health board

decision? Or does the department as well have something to say regarding construction of personal care homes across this province?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, as I understand the process, we've laid out the criteria in broad strokes, that we've talked about it today. Once those criteria will have been met, if they're all met . . . and I would not want to mislead the member, these are very stringent criteria. Again I refer you to the building code standards to meet those criteria in the planning of a facility. They're very stringent standards.

In the circumstance that all of the criteria have been met — and this would be working with the combination of the community or the owner and the department — if we've reached that stage, part of that discussion will have involved the district. The districts will not have the authority or responsibility to licence. That will remain with the Department of Health. But as part of the criteria, we would want to have conversations and consultations with the districts because we want them to be part of the discussion.

Now at the end of the day, if all of the stringent criteria are met for this kind of residential option, then a licence would be issued by the department. Now I assume there would be some municipal . . . other perhaps municipal zoning issues and perhaps municipal building codes and so on that would need to be worked through on a local basis.

But our essential role is to license and then, as follow-up to the licence, to continue an ongoing process of inspections and regulation.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So really what it boils down to, it boils down to the department basically issuing a licence to allow for a personal care home to operate. Without that licence, that personal care home doesn't proceed.

If a district is in favour of the personal care home as . . . Now you mentioned there will be consultations with the district while . . . And I would take it this is while you're looking or reviewing an application that comes in to license, because I would think that you would certainly want to have the district involved in approving of the project as well, rather than the department issuing a licence and finding out afterwards that the district isn't in favour of it.

But if the district itself feels that this would be beneficial to the district and they're more than willing to allow and to proceed, what level of weight would the department look at in that licence as well? Will you take the support from the district into some of the considerations given regarding the licensing, in view of the fact if all the requirements and the conditions you've laid out have been met, to at the end of the day grant the licence to proceed with that personal care home?

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we haven't sort of weighted

the various criteria. We haven't given any particular weight, value to any of their criteria.

Obviously if a district, for whatever reason, had some strong objection, we would want to be very conscious of what that objection was and why they would raise it. On the other hand, if a district is very supportive, then that will also be taken certainly into consideration.

But let me say, a district may be supportive or even very supportive, but if the business plan on the other hand demonstrates non-viability or only short-term viability, then that certainly wouldn't outweigh the other. Or if a district was very supportive but the national building codes weren't being adhered to, well obviously that wouldn't take the weight.

We haven't given them weight. You're absolutely right that we want the districts to be a part of the decision, and in fact we would want in fact those who would be proposing any kind of new development like this to really work with the district first before making a formal application to the department.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the discussion we've had this morning and the recommendations that you've come up with and the conditions that you've brought forward as we look into the future and the licensing of personal care homes . . . and I'm going to raise the one of Avonlea because certainly they've been working at it for quite awhile. The individual they've contacted to come and work with them, Carol Krieger, has a couple homes up and running.

The question I would like to know is based on the criteria now laid out for the licensing of personal care homes, and if . . . I mean rather than an if, how long do you anticipate it would be before a community like Avonlea, if they meet all the conditions based on your recent announcement, would be granted a licence? When could it . . . and I'm not saying that . . . I'm not really asking you to say, well Avonlea can expect it on such a day. The only reason I'm bringing their proposal forward is because I'm familiar with it, and you are.

I'm just saying, how long would it take for a community to receive a licence and be able to proceed with construction of a personal care home?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, as the member will understand — and it is understandable, of course — the Avonlea group have not put together a formal proposal in this interim period. Now they would be able to . . . I think it will take them I'm sure some time, looking at their own circumstances and these kind of criteria to work through a proposal.

It will take us a number of weeks yet to formalize and finalize all of the regulations. I would hope they would be in place at least by the end of May. Once that formalized package of regulations is put in place reflecting these criteria and a proposal comes forward, it shouldn't take an extended period of time for the Department of Health to work with the regulations

they'll have and the proposal that comes in. We would certainly be talking weeks, rather than months, to work through a proposal.

One, of course, one of the most, from our point of view, I think one of the most significant issues is the feasibility, the business plan, the viability issue, which relates to some of the national building codes and so on.

So we'll want to take sufficient time in working with any proposal that's brought forward, particularly around the issue of the feasibility and the business plan. We'll want to take sufficient time to be confident that anything that might be licensed would in fact have every hope of a long-term future.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I would like to ask if you could at least give your assurance that the department will do everything in its power to have the regulations established and laid out as quickly as possible and, if not before, by the end of May. You had indicated that may be a possibility.

But I think, Mr. Minister, we need to — and for groups and individuals out there — we need to have some guidelines set. Otherwise what will happen is this will just drag on and drag on and drag on, and we're still waiting for regulations.

And I think it's obvious from some of the information you've sent to us just recently, that a lot of discussion has already taken place on this matter. And the department no doubt has a pretty good idea of how they're going to address and bring forward the regulations to address these concerns and set forward the regulations to meet the needs of personal care homes.

And I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can at least commit to this Assembly today that the department will do everything within its power to basically set a guideline for itself or time period, time frame, so that we can get on with the process of dealing with the requests that have come in or will be coming in from the province regarding personal care homes.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I've learned in earlier conversations with the member, not to say soon. But I want to assure all members that yes, the response to the member's question is that we'll be working through these as quickly as the wheels of government can grind and get them in place . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the regulations are very important. I think all members will recognize that what is perhaps more important is the long-term viability of any proposals that come forward.

Some of the proposals that have come forward in past have not demonstrated any willingness to meet National Building Code standards which makes it simply and virtually and of course impossible for a licence to be issued by a provincial government. And meeting those National Building Code standards are very stringent, and they're very expensive, which has significant impact on business viability and the business plan.

These are really some of the very, very key issues that we're going to have to work with any proponent around. But when it comes right down to the regulations, I'm confident that my suggestion at the end May is more than adequate to have them in place.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to your officials again, Mr. Minister.

When government departments began the process of budget preparation last fall, you must have had some kind of direction from the Department of Finance in how to go about planning your budgets.

Could you tell me please, what those directions from Finance were, including what the spending areas were that you were instructed to look for spending cuts or efficiencies?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And welcome to the member to the process of estimates this morning. She will know, from having been in the House now for a couple of years, that a year ago we announced some two-year planning for the Health budget cycle . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, it's only been a year; why does it seem like two, Mr. Chair?

However, from her reading I'm sure of press and other sources outside of the House, she will know that we set out a two-year plan in terms of some of the health care spending. And so it was known and we'd announced that there would be in fact a 1.6 per cent increase as part of our two-year plan on the institutional in '95-96.

So that is understood, and has been understood by the Department of Finance and the Department of Health that over a two-year cycle that was part of the plan.

Then how it works around government now is that the Department of Finance will ask of every department, including the Department of Health, to identify their areas of need in terms of budgeting or programing need; and then consultations continue between the Department of Finance, the Department of Health, every other department of government, refining and defining of . . . ultimately a draft of a health budget is provided and a draft of the total provincial government budget is provided. And then it becomes the responsibility of members of Executive Council to work through the process of determining budget. And then in our government that process then moves into the entire caucus to work through the process of setting the provincial budget.

All of this under the umbrella of the fiscal plan which we announced prior to and at the time of forming government, that our intention has been to restore some financial stability and sanity to the expenditures and the revenues of government to bring this province to a balanced fiscal position. And so all of that falls within the overall umbrella of what we've achieved, and that's the balanced budget circumstance.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you for a description of the process

for me. Were you instructed to look for specific spending cuts or efficiencies?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the department was not directed by the Department of Finance to undertake any areas of cutting. We are directed and all of our departments are directed in the same manner, and that's to seek out and find any administrative or overhead efficiencies or savings that we can find.

And I may say the Department of Health has done some very good work in that regard in trying to find those efficiencies and those overheads and those administrative savings wherever we can find them. And so that has been the direction and remains the direction to all of our departments, including the Department of Health.

In this year's budget, as you will know, there are no significant cuts in programing. In fact the programing is growing in some small ways to meet the needs of the programs. Our district board budgets each, this year, have seen a small — it's variable for most of them -- small, but at least some pattern of increase.

Mrs. Bergman: — Just out of curiosity, how much did that increase have to do with the devolving of the department's workers to the district boards?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I will provide for the member the global figures. We could provide these, in fact, district by district, because there is a variance because we're now funding on a needs based funding formula. So there is some variance in the percentages, district by district.

But on the global basis, in district board funding which is the prime vehicle of providing services to people outside of physician care, there is — as I've said — and was planned a 1.6 per cent budgetary increase for all of the districts, factored by the funding formula. If you then add to that the new resources we're providing for community and home-based services — that's the \$20.6 million — that moves the total increase up to 3.5 per cent in funding. And then if you add to that the effect of the exact shift of the funding that we were spending through the department for community services, the public health, and so on that have been transferred, that money just moves laterally to the districts. Then the increase would be accounted as a 10.9 per cent increase.

(1245)

But you will note that when we're speaking publicly, we do not suggest that there's been a 10.9 per cent increase in funding to health service in the districts because a fair, significant chunk of that is in fact the monies that have transferred with the programs — public health and mental health and so on.

So in essence the overall increase this year in district funding on the base budget is 1.6 per cent. With the new community and home-based funding it would be 3.5 per cent.

Mrs. Bergman: — I'm curious as to this devolved amount. Is it 7.4 per cent, the cost of the devolved workers? I'm curious as to why it's not . . . as you say, we didn't increase it 10.4 per cent. But indeed you did increase that funding 10.4 per cent in order to cover those workers which you've claimed credit for getting rid of in the department itself.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes. I think what I'm saying here to the member is that I mean some may be prone in the political sphere that we all live in to go about trying to claim that we've increased district board funding by 10.9 per cent. That would be an unfair and an unwise claim.

Neither are we claiming . . . Even though it would be literally true as the member points out, it would be literally true, but it would be unwise to claim that somehow there's been a 10 per cent expansion in funding which would therefore mean a 10 per cent expansion in service.

What is happening here, of course, is that services that have been provided and funded directly by the Department of Health are now being provided and funded by the districts. And so in terms of the overall budget, it's a level figure. It's a level figure, but the provision is now by the district rather than by the department.

What has not been a level figure in this year's budget is the 1.6 per cent increase which was announced a year ago to the districts. And then with the new community and home based resources of \$20 million that increases it actually to 3.5 on the total global. And again I repeat that it will vary district by district because with the needs-based funding formula that inserts some variables and variances in the actual amounts. Now I can say this, that every district board has received in this year's budget some increase. But some of the increases are larger than others. None of them could be described as extremely large.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you tell me how that 1.6 per cent increase was determined a year ago in this budgeting process you're talking about?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Okay on this . . . I think, if I have the member's question right, it was how was the 1.6 determined a year ago? It in essence represents the cost of a negotiated salary increases, as you know, through the public process of contract negotiations and so on. There were some small, small salary increases. And so the 1.6 is destined to cover the salary increases, benefit increases that will also accrue there, inflation — inflation factor, particularly in long-term care — community, and home care. So that essentially is the 1.6.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you. You discussed the global increase. Could we get a copy of those individual board increases as well and how those percentages are distributed in those increases?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, there is a certain factor of time here. We've just come into the new fiscal year. All of the

health district boards have now been provided — or their administration has been provided — with exact budgetary numbers for this year.

Our concern is that there may be some of our district boards who have not yet had the opportunity, as board members, to work with their administration to be aware of those exact numbers. And so I'm hesitant today, Mr. Chair, to make public all of the exact numbers here in the House until I'm absolutely confident that all of our district boards have had an opportunity since April 1 or late in March to actually see and work with their numbers.

When, Mr. Speaker, we're confident that that process has all worked through, we'll be sure to provide for the member or table them here in the House, if we're still here, that information . . . Because it's public information but we want to be sensitive to the processes within the government and within our districts.

I can share with the member that . . . Well I don't have numbers attached. But the majority of the boards this year will receive increases between 2 and 4 per cent. Another fairly large group of them will receive increases over 4 per cent, and a few will have increases between zero and 2 per cent. Here, I'm just being provided the more accurate numbers.

Here are the exact numbers. Four of our districts will have increases of less than 2 per cent; 16 of the districts will have increases between 2 and 4 per cent; and 10 districts will have increases that are greater than 4 per cent.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Do those figures include the devolved workers?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, they do not.

Mrs. Bergman: — Okay, and I appreciate what you're talking about. How long does this process take, and when are we likely to be able to have access to this information?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, our best estimate at this point is that if we're back into Health estimates, perhaps next, at the end of next week or earlier in the following week, maybe a little after Easter, but it's that kind of time frame.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's very prompt.

Mr. Minister, the *Estimates* document shows a drastic change in the number of full-time positions in your department from 1,845 to 783 as a result of the devolution. Could you explain how the devolution process is going? For example, is it complete? Were there problems in any other things that help give us a picture of how it's proceeding?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I can report to the member and the House today that in essence the transfer of the programs, the employees that deliver those very valuable programs, is complete. That the transfer did happen on April 1.

That there have been agreements signed in every one of the districts. There are ongoing committees in place to ensure . . . this is still a period of transition, and there are the ongoing committees in place to ensure any issues that may arise are dealt with.

I do want to say that I think from our perspective as legislators, we should extend congratulations and compliments to the people who worked so hard, not just in the last few weeks but over the course of the last year in preparing for this very, very significant change. And that includes the workers themselves who have been involved in this in some ways unsettling of their lives, and yet they will know that none have had to relocate and that in essence their employer has changed and now they have an opportunity to work more closely with other providers to provide an integrated service in their districts. But the workers themselves have worked very hard over the course of the last number of months to ensure this transition occurred as smoothly as possible.

I'd want to congratulate and compliment officials within the Department of Health who endeavoured to keep up very, very good and open lines of communication throughout the process, and equally, to extend congratulations to SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and the district boards who have worked very hard to see this process happen.

In many ways, this has been a very, very significant and historic event — a major transfer of programs that have traditionally been delivered by provincial government to the district model. And so I can report that the transfer is complete and has been a very smooth process, and any issues that may arise, the committees are still in place.

The House Leader, I believe, Mr. Chair, is prepared now to move adjournment of the House. I want to just take this opportunity and then leave an opportunity for the member, just to thank again the officials from the Department of Health for their service to this legislature this afternoon and for their ongoing service to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would also like to thank the members of the department for their valuable service.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:59 p.m.