

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 15, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

P.A. (Prince Albert). I so present.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to deliver petitions on behalf of the Shaunavon school and the people there, and I will read the prayer:

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

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

I'm happy to deliver these on behalf of the people of south-west Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

These petitions come from Spalding, Quill Lake, Rose Valley areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions I wish to lay on the Table today, and I'd like to read the prayer:

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 firearm owners, in order to halt the federal Liberal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

And the petitions I am presenting today, Mr. Speaker, are signed by . . . the majority are signed by individuals from the Nipawin area, White Fox, Saskatoon, Birch Hills, St. Louis, and

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have several pages of petitions I would like to present, and I will just therefore read the prayer. And the prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these come from Preeceville, Sturgis, Saskatoon, Regina, and several other places. I would like to present them at this time.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with my colleagues in presenting petitions to the Assembly from people around the province, and I will read the prayer to identify the type of petition:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners come mainly from Preeceville, although there are signatories as well from Endeavour, Hazel Dell, Prince Albert, and Wadena. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to lay these on the Table at this time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions dealing with this issue of gun control. They come from the Buchanan, Yorkton, Estevan, Prince Albert, Canwood areas of the province. I'd be pleased to present them now to the Assembly.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House, a group of students from the North Star School at Hyas and they're seated in your west gallery, Mr. Speaker. Eleven students in all from the grades 7, 8, and 9 and they're accompanied here today by their teacher, Stella Wohlgemuth — and I hope I pronounced that right, Stella.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome this group here as most of them are friends and neighbours of mine, as my farm is located probably only 12 miles from Hyas and less than that from many of their farms. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all the members here to offer them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my real pleasure today to be introducing to you and to all members of the House, 53 students from Westmount School in Moose Jaw. They're accompanied by three of their teachers and the two bus drivers.

Westmount has had a tradition, Mr. Speaker, of having school groups visit the legislature. I'm glad to see that tradition continue. I'm looking forward to meeting with the students for some drinks, some good questions, and some photos a little later this afternoon. I'd invite all members of the House to welcome these grade 8 students from Westmount School in Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce through you and to all members of the Assembly, along with the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, 10 living skills program students from the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) Palliser campus in Moose Jaw who are seated in the west gallery.

They are accompanied today by their instructor, Paula Green, I see. And following their stay in the Assembly here, they'll be taking a tour of the building and then we'll meet later for photos and refreshments and a visit.

Members may recognize some former colleagues of theirs who have attended to the Legislative Assembly in the past. And I'd ask all members to wish them a warm welcome and a very successful conclusion to their studies this year.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, a constituent of mine, a grade 12 student from Pangman, Heidi Kessler, who is here today and seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

She's here on a school-related program in which she is getting some kind of work experience or shadowing the work of our pages. And so I welcome Heidi here today. Enjoy your visit. I understand also that Pangman School will be in on Thursday, and hope to see you then also.

I'd like all members to welcome Heidi Kessler here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

SaskTel Modernization in Northern Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to report some excellent development in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reporting the SaskTel's 3-phase \$29 million modernization program. And it includes, Mr. Speaker, a fibre optics from Molanosa to Pinehouse. We have digitization in the communities as well as satellite-based stations.

On phase 1 and 2, Mr. Speaker, we have communities impacted . . . are Wollaston Lake, Southend, Grandmother's Bay, Stanley Mission, Pinehouse, Pelican Narrows, Sandy Bay, and Hull Lake.

Mr. Speaker, on phase 2, satellite earth stations and also the switches will be done in the following communities — of Black Lake, Stony Rapids, Fond-du-Lac, and Uranium City. Mr. Speaker, this important connection, which creates the latest in technological and communication linkages, is a tremendous step forward, with the Government of Saskatchewan and the communities of the North.

Mr. Speaker, also I would like to say this. We have, on Friday, on last Friday on the 12th, the Premier was there, the Highways minister was there, and the bridge of Cumberland House was . . . the sod was finally turned. A tremendous, tremendous day for Cumberland House. Mr. Speaker, we feel also that there was representation from the MP (Member of Parliament), Vic Althouse, and I think that this is a tremendous day. The linkage between the community of Cumberland and the province of Saskatchewan, a great day for the people of Cumberland.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Meat Processing Plant Expansions

Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's an appropriate after-lunch topic: meat. Last week Intercontinental Packers in Saskatoon and Western Canadian Beef Packers in Moose Jaw announced plant expansions.

Mr. Speaker, the Intercon expansion will include the addition of smoke houses for sausage and smoked meat with larger shipping and distribution facilities. Meanwhile Western Canadian will construct new coolers and expand its plant to include bone beef, processed hamburger, and counter-ready

beef products.

These expansions are the result of government cooperation; \$5 million in forgivable loans are being made available. These loans are interest free for five years and forgivable at the rate of \$12,500 for every incremental job created in the first three years. Taxpayers will also benefit because the two companies have agreed to forego more than a million dollars in tax investment credits. That was the good news, Mr. Speaker.

Now for the really good news. The expansions will create 400 jobs, while maintaining the existing 1,070 jobs. As well, 158 person-years of construction will be required.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who want to do away with our Economic Development department, and they must also want to do away with both these new jobs and the many existing jobs.

I want to congratulate Intercon and Western Canadian for their expansions and thank these companies and their productive employees for their continuing contribution to our economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Battered Women's Awareness Week

Mr. Carlson: — Mr. Speaker, this is Battered Women's Awareness Week. With studies showing that as many as 4 out of 10 women may be subjected to abuse, we must ask why so many women live in fear in their own homes. We as a society cannot afford to dismiss this problem. We have a responsibility to examine what causes this violence and to deal with its results.

While this is a serious problem, I am encouraged by the progress we have made to alleviate and eliminate it. Last year, this Assembly passed The Victims of Domestic Violence Act. We also have increased support for community-based services.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, volunteers and agencies continue to perform selfless and important work. They quietly perform their task, neither receiving nor demanding attention. The reward is the faith and hope that domestic violence may some day be non-existent.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend those who deal with the issue. Their work is both meaningful and necessary. I also challenge all people to strive to ensure that the larger issue of the treatment of women in our society is dealt with. It is only in dealing with these large issues that we will be able to solve this ongoing social problem.

Finally, to bettered women everywhere, I say: please do not be afraid to reach out and seek help. Your pain is not your fault nor is your burden yours to share alone. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening of Bakuluk Bus Lines

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to announce that as of next Tuesday you will be able to get on a bus in Radville, make quick stops to pick up other passengers and freight in Ceylon, Bengough, Ogema, and Pangman, and travel on to Regina, and be able to return home the same evening.

This good news announcement is the result of efforts of individuals, businesses, and the communities in my constituency. I am pleased with the results and gratified that I could play a role in bringing this service to my constituency.

The official launch of Bakuluk Bus Lines Ltd. was held in Bengough on Saturday at Bengough Motors with Jack Toothill as the agent in Bengough.

Bakuluk Bus Lines is operated by Joe and Elizabeth Bakuluk with agents in Pangman, Ogema, Ceylon, Radville, Bengough, and the Oasis at the junction of Highway 6 and 13. Drivers Linda and Bev were also present.

The Highway Traffic Board has approved a five-day per week passenger express service. Business people, farmers, and seniors, applauded the announcement of this service.

The Bakuluku bring proven experience and expertise to this line. They currently operate a similar service between Regina and Kenossee. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that keeps rural Saskatchewan viable, and although I expressed my personal congratulations and thanks to the Bakuluku and all the agents and communities involved on Saturday, I want to publicly repeat them and extend our best wishes to this vote of confidence in rural Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spiritwood Featured in *Canadian Living* Magazine

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, the rural way of life in Saskatchewan is once again receiving acclaim. Today I'm pleased to inform the Assembly that the June edition of the *Canadian Living* magazine has excellent coverage of the annual Spiritwood grounds and garden competition.

In the words of the reporter who wrote the article, Naomi Frankel: the gardens of Spiritwood, Saskatchewan are motivated by community pride and the love of the land.

The article went on to say that not only is the natural beauty of the area captivating, but the cultivated beauty of the grounds and gardens is impressive for what it says about the area's residents.

I would like to congratulate Betty Mykietiak who won first prize for both the rural garden and the rural grounds category,

and Julie Simon for the taking first place in the urban ground Spiritwood category.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to the other award winner and to the Spiritwood Horticultural Society for putting on this event. As the article suggests, this annual competition and show are part of the region's community spirit and one way the residents keep the lifeblood of their community flowing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Advertising

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other day my party ran an ad in some newspapers and some people made the comment that they thought the name Progressive Conservative was too small. That's funny, because every day the papers are full of NDP (New Democratic Party) ads that don't say NDP anywhere. I guess that's because these ads are paid for by the taxpayers and disguised as government advertising.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Provincial Secretary. Mr. Minister, I understand one of the very few actual duties you have as Provincial Secretary is to oversee the advertising that is done by all government departments. I was wondering if you could give us a report on the amount of advertising your government has done this fiscal year.

Mr. Minister, what is the year's overall advertising budget for the government Crowns and departments, and how much have you already spent of that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member, the Leader of the Opposition, well knows that to get specific answers on numbers is . . . the appropriate place to do that is in the estimates of the relevant departments. I don't have that information before me. I will undertake to provide for it when the questions are asked in the . . . whichever departments they're asked.

And in my department, I certainly will be able to respond, and I hope that maybe we'll be able to get to those estimates this week and I'll have that information available.

But I can assure the member of one thing, that the amount of advertising that is spent by this government is by several million dollars less than was spent by the former administration in the last year of their term. And I think that that's the appropriate thing to do in order to reduce the expenditures of government; but yet at the same time make sure that the citizens of Saskatchewan know, through advertising and other means, the programs which they pay for which are available to them, so that they can access them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, here's another one of your broken promises: the NDP will reduce government advertising by 80 per cent. Remember making that kind of commitment to the taxpayers of this province during the last election campaign? Well it hasn't happened.

And now you're spending more than ever on taxpayer funded pre-election ad campaign — well over a hundred thousand dollars on health advertising, almost half a million dollars on job creation advertising. And it's interesting that health and job creation are your two major . . . probably two major election issues upcoming, and the two areas where your government has had the most dismal record and need to shore up its image.

Mr. Minister, why are the taxpayers of this province paying for your pre-election campaign promises?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I can say very clearly to the Leader of the Official Opposition that if he checks the record he will see that the amount of advertising that is being spent by the government in every year since we became government — including this year — even after inflation is taken into consideration, is less than was spent under the time when that administration was on this side of the House and occupying these front benches, Mr. Speaker.

But there are certain kinds of advertising that is necessary — whether it's JobStart, Mr. Speaker, or whether it's services that people need to know so that they know where they should be able to go to access those jobs or those particular services. It's important that the public be made aware of them.

And that's the kind of advertising that this government does — advertising that serves, from an information point of view, the people who pay the taxes to get those services. Not the kind of political advertising that used to take place under the former administration and that you see take place by Liberal administrations everywhere across this country and has really no useful purpose whatsoever except to try to promote the political party of that particular administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, another area where your government has a dismal record is utility rates. You've used utility rates as a back-door taxation method and raised them time after time. So now do you do anything concrete to address the problem? No. Instead you are hitting Saskatchewan people with a barrage of ads telling us how low our rates are.

Mr. Minister, how much did this advertising campaign cost so far? And how much more taxpayers' money do you intend to spend on image advertising before the election is called?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The advertising is done by each of the Crown corporations. This, Mr. Speaker, is a more appropriate question for our Crown Corporations Committee. The government itself and the Crown Investments Corporation does not do any advertising directly.

Let me say with respect to the substance of the ads, as distinct from the ads themselves, they advertise rates which are competitive with those across Canada — more than competitive — and the return on equity of the Crown corporations is more than competitive with the private industry.

So both the rates and the corporations are efficient and the public get good service and we believe they acknowledge that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Loans to Business

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier or to his designate. Mr. Premier, last week you announced a \$5 million forgivable loan to Intercon and Western Canadian Beef Packers. Now in today's order in council you have granted an additional \$2.5 million to Watergroup Companies Inc. Since the beginning of this session you have given out millions of taxpayers' dollars in your efforts to bolster your poor job creation record before the election. That includes \$150 million loan to your former nemesis, Crown Life Insurance.

Mr. Premier, I realize that we're on the eve of an election. But given your loud opposition to government loans and grants to businesses, I'm wondering why you feel it's necessary to buy jobs with taxpayers' money. That's not what you promised the people during the last election, Mr. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that I'm pleased he is paying attention to the thousands of jobs that are being created in Saskatchewan by the business community.

And I want to say to him very clearly as well, is that when announcements are made, when CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) announces they're moving to Saskatchewan to create 500 good paying jobs at a call centre, the members opposite are critical.

When we talk to them about Drake Meats expanding in Drake, Saskatchewan, and creating jobs, they complain about it. And when Thomson Meats doubles their capacity in Melfort, they complain. And when Mr. Glass announces that he's expanding his air service into the United States under the new bilateral open air policy, they complain.

There isn't anything that will make these people happy even though under their administration, billions — not millions, but billions — of dollars were squandered in almost any area you can think about.

But for you to talk about waste when it comes to expanding the beef processing, the slaughtering capability in this province, when we watch to the west of us, where I believe \$200 million were forgiven by the Alberta government for your buddy, Mr. Pocklington, in that fiasco, to say that we have anything to worry about or to be critical of us and the deals that are being struck with the small assistance from the people of this province, is almost laughable in light of the fact that we have to compete with your friends in Alberta.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, we're only struck by your hypocrisy in this whole matter. Last month you lost a thousand jobs; you gain a few but you always lose more.

Mr. Minister, let me quote from a speech that your Premier gave on the eve of the 1991 provincial election. This quote comes from your 1990 fund-raiser dinner: In the 1990s, governments cannot be involved in this kind of financing to be involved in commercial activity.

Pretty definite. That was the Premier's comment back then. But as usual, you've delivered something completely different. In spite of your repeated and noisy opposition to grants to businesses, you've done exactly that; you've done just exactly what you promised you wouldn't do just before another provincial election.

Let me ask you the same question that you asked while you were in opposition. And this was the Premier's comment: Why are you throwing hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money around while you're asking everyone to tighten their own belts, taxing them to the hilt, and closing their hospitals to boot?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member obviously is into his election rhetoric and exaggeration when he talks about hundreds of millions of dollars. That's obviously the former Conservative government when they were in government and dealing with things like GigaText and all of those wasteful expenditures of money.

I want to quote to you and to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, a quote from one Mr. Wilfred Campbell who is the Saskatchewan stock growers president, and his comments on the expansion announced Friday. But he says that major expansion of the two meat-packing plants in the province will be substantial boosts to the provincial economy. Campbell says the increased capacity will open new markets, create more jobs, and mean even greater growth in the livestock numbers in the province. And I quote: I see this as being real positive for our Saskatchewan beef industry.

Now if the members opposite understand pork and beef production, they will understand the need for slaughtering capability in the province. They will also understand that we have need to compete with the megabucks that are being subsidized into the Alberta economy as it would relate to the same industry. You may want to get onto the phone and give Mr. Klein a call and see if he will reduce the amount of money he's subsidizing this industry so we don't have to compete with him for the same results.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, this morning I heard on the radio that Alberta had the best record in the past year for growth, and Prince Edward Island was next. Saskatchewan wasn't even on the top end of the list at all. So you'll have to excuse us for our cynicism, Mr. Minister. But there are a lot of cynics out there who don't believe you because of your past promises and your past record. You create one job and you lose two, and the two usually go to Alberta.

Now you have promised to eliminate poverty. You've promised that the PST (provincial sales tax) would end by October 21, 1994. You told people in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that the PC (Progressive Conservative) government would close down all of the hospitals in that constituency, and then you went out and did it yourself.

Now the Premier also promised, Minister, that — in the same fund-raising speech that I talked about a minute ago and I'll quote from that again — an NDP government would eliminate unfairness in the awarding of government contracts.

Unfortunately, you delivered the exact opposite, as usual, and the most unfair, biased, politically motivated, and costly tendering process possible is what you delivered.

Now, Mr. Minister, how does giving these kinds of grants to businesses and these kinds of contracts through your union buddies, square with your promises to get the government out of our economy? And how does this square with your Premier's promise, Mr. Minister, to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the members opposite and to the Assembly, that the government, we believe, does have a role to play when it comes to developing the economy of the province. We are not in the category, as the Liberals and Tories seem to be, competing for the Reform vote.

I must say though that with the small percentage that the Reform vote is at in this province, I'm surprised that both parties are competing for that small ground. But maybe one shouldn't be surprised when you realize that they are so lacking in any policy that they have to go after the Reform Party to try to find a platform to run on.

And I noticed with great interest the attempt to Americanize the process more by talking about recall of MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in the platform announced in their platform last Friday by the Leader of the Opposition. But I can tell him he shouldn't worry about recall, because there's going to be an election very soon and when there'll be a number of recalls from members of that caucus, and so you shouldn't be too anxious for recall of MLAs because it's going to happen very quickly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Training Programs Advertising

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of this province learned Saturday that the government has spent almost a half a million dollars on advertising for so-called job creation programs. This advertising blitz comes at a time when a provincial election call is just around the corner. The minister has stated in this weekend's paper that these costs will rise as the programs progress.

My question to the Minister of Education. I am sure that your department has a total advertising budget. What will the total cost of advertising be when Future Skills and JobStart are completed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. This program so far has created over 600 jobs — real jobs. If you look at governments across this country — and the Liberals are famous for it — they have thrown grants to business to train people but the training has led nowhere. It has led absolutely nowhere.

This program is ground-breaking, Mr. Speaker. For the first time in this country we're addressing the question of training for what. We are training people for real jobs, jobs that will exist into the future. The individual will receive publicly recognized training that will allow them to go on to further post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is the wave of the future. This is what we need to be doing — training people for real jobs, jobs that exist now so that Saskatchewan people, not Albertans, not Manitobans, not Ontarians, can have those jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, I have no argument with the fact that this is a leading-edge concept that the government has brought forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — My concern, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the fact of how they brought it forward. Mr. Speaker, I table a list titled Future Skills status report. This is a detailed list of proposed Future Skills placements as of the end of March. The list shows that just over 900,000 in grants have been approved

or conditionally approved for this program.

My question to the Minister of Education: how can you justify spending half a million dollars in advertising already, when according to this list you have only actually allocated 900,000 to businesses to help create these jobs?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is we are having business work with public training institutions to deliver a training program that is real, that leads to a portable credential — to a credential that gets you into further education.

This is not an easy process. We're challenging business and challenging public training institutions to deliver work-based training that leads to a real skill, a portable skill, a skill that will lead elsewhere.

Now you say you've got a report as of the end of March. We are now into the middle of May — six weeks later. There are other training projects that have been approved by SIAST. We have other projects that are in the process of being approved. But we don't want to deliver any old training program; we want to deliver a training program that meets the needs of the individual employer, that will also lead to a real credential for the employee that's receiving that training.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister has stated that there have been over 8,400 inquiries about Future Skills and JobStart through the 1-800 number. The department surely has tracking in place to show how many of these inquiries actually led to job placements, or whether the majority of jobs were filled by companies suggesting specific workers.

My question to the minister: how many of these inquiries actually led to successful placements for people using the 1-800 line?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we have 600 people that are now in jobs, real jobs.

I was in Biggar last week. Microgro industries, which is the leading edge for the greenhouse industry in Saskatchewan, for the first time we're going to try and wholesale seedlings to greenhouses across the province. We're not going to import those seedlings from British Columbia or the United States. This is a made-in-Saskatchewan industry.

We have trainees at Microgro, people who were unemployed in the area of Biggar — I just happen to know this area because that's my home area — these are people that didn't have jobs. And, Mr. Speaker, they're working in that greenhouse and they're going to get, at the end of this process, a horticultural certificate from the University of Saskatchewan. That's the kind of training, work-based kind of training, that's going to not only lead to permanent jobs, but going to lead to industry in this province that could sustain itself, and we could begin to export our goods and services instead of being importers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, these programs are supposed to provide jobs for young people across the province. The main focus is on training these people to qualify for specific industries, specific jobs.

My question to the minister: will all the people who receive training under the Future Skills program be placed in related jobs when their training is completed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the way we have the program designed is that in order for the employer to get reimbursement for the training, that individual, if they're successful, has to be in a long-term, permanent job. They have to be there into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Prince Albert last week at Shuttle Craft. The average age of this company is 22 years of age. They have over 50 people, young people from the city of P.A. and area, working in that business. And we are training over 20 people to become fibreglass applicators; 99 per cent of the Shuttle Craft product is exported into the United States — Florida and Texas.

Mr. Speaker, those are the kinds of jobs that we need to develop here in Saskatchewan. We're not only training people to become fibreglass applicators, but we're supporting a young business where the owners are 25 years of age, so that they can create jobs in Saskatchewan, pay taxes here, and develop a product that we can export into the U.S. (United States) market.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Sales Tax Exemption

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier or his designate. Mr. Premier, why is it so hard for your party to give a straight answer regarding the PST exemption for status Indians? I have made our position very clear. I would end the exemption for purchases made off reserve. However the clearest answer we can get out of you guys is the Associate Minister of Finance saying it's in the government's interest to determine whether or not some different accommodation might be put in place with respect to the PST. But he wouldn't elaborate on any specific changes.

Mr. Premier, or Mr. Minister, as leader of your party, can you give us a straight answer? Do you intend to end the PST exemption, yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — As was pointed out in an editorial in the *Leader-Post* this morning, complex questions do not admit of simplistic answers.

We are undertaking discussions and promoting discussions in an attempt to resolve a broad range of tax issues which are difficult and complex. We think that is an appropriate way to

resolve this. We do not think the Conservative approach, which is in equal parts cynical and the timing is strange right before an election, we do not think your approach contributes to a solution at all. What will contribute to a solution is both sides discussing the matter with a hope of resolving it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the minister is saying, kind of in code, but what he is exactly saying is that they don't want to discuss important issues during an election campaign. What better time to address those kind of issues, Mr. Minister, than an election campaign?

Every day the election gets closer, your answers get more confusing. You might lower the PST, then again you might not. You might end the PST exemption for status Indians, then again you might not. It's just like you made all the promises you made in 1991. You might keep your promises, then again maybe you won't.

Mr. Minister, you know exactly where we stand. We would end the PST exemption on off-reserve purchases as an overall package to lower the PST to 7 per cent. Why won't you give Saskatchewan people the same kind of straight answer? Or do you intend to do exactly what you've said?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It's apparent, Mr. Speaker, some things don't change. In 1982 the Progressive Conservatives promised to eliminate the sales tax, and we know what happened thereafter. What happened thereafter is you led the province to the brink of ruin. This party came into office promising sound fiscal management, and that's what we delivered.

It is true that members opposite have promised to reduce the sales tax by 2 per cent. It's also fair for the public to ask, where are you going to get it from? I want to tell the members opposite, the public have a sense of *déjà vu*. You went into the 1982 election promising the sun, the moon, and the stars, and you delivered the dark of night. Once again you . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I wish members . . . look, let's not point fingers at each other. I think members know who have been interrupting this whole question period. And I'm asking members to please have respect for the minister and for the questioner.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I would point out to members opposite, your 2 per cent cut in the sales tax is going to cost \$215 million. It is fair and the public are asking, where are you going to get it from? And they know where you're going to get it from. You're going to get it from Education, from Health, and from those two main services. And I say to members opposite, that is not what the public of Saskatchewan want in 1995.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So you're saying to the people of Saskatchewan what they want is a promise like your Premier made in 1991 to eliminate the PST on election night midnight. That's what he promised and he didn't deliver to the people of Saskatchewan.

Your answers get more and more confusing as the days go by. So do the contradictions between you and the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). The Associate Minister of Finance says that the government is negotiating with the FSIN on this matter. Chief Blaine Favel says no negotiations are under way.

Who are we supposed to believe, Mr. Minister? Mr. Minister, why does the NDP keep saying that negotiations are under way when clearly that is not the case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a contrast in style. We are attempting to resolve the problem; members opposite are attempting to put together a hasty election plank — and it does look hasty.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think we should consider moving the Leader of the Opposition's chair a little ways away from the Liberal leader because you're catching some of the disease of the problem with facts. You've changed your position on this at least twice . . .

An Hon. Member: — No we haven't.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Oh yes, you have. You've changed your position on this at least twice.

I've a suggestion to the Leader of the Opposition, that is, you take a little more time and put a little more thought into what is a complex issue and stop trying to turn it into a cynical election plank.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 66 — An Act respecting Changes of Name /Loi concernant les changements de nom

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Changes of Name be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 67 — An Act respecting the keeping of Vital Statistics/Loi concernant les services de l'état civil

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting the keeping of Vital Statistics be now introduced and

read the first time.

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

**Bill No. 68 — An Act respecting Regulations
/Loi concernant les règlements**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Regulations be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Bill No. 69 — An Act respecting the Interpretation of
Enactments and prescribing Rules Governing Enactments
/Loi concernant l'interprétation des textes et édictant
les règles les régissant**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I move that a Bill respecting the Interpretation of Enactments and prescribing Rules Governing Enactments be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Bill No. 70 — An Act respecting the Solemnization of
Marriage/Loi concernant la célébration du mariage**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting the Solemnization of Marriage be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Bill No. 71 — An Act respecting Victims of Crime/Loi sur
les victimes d'actes criminels**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Victims of Crime be now introduced and read the first time.

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

The Speaker: — Order. I think this is the last warning I'm going to give those two members. Order.

(1415)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I ask leave of the House to introduce a motion.

The Speaker: — Does the member have leave? Does the member have leave? Order. The member may proceed with his motion and will ask for leave.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move a motion that a humble address be presented to His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor. This address will recommend that Kenneth W. Acton of Moose Jaw be reappointed as the member of the Public and Private Rights Board pursuant to section 6 of The Expropriation Procedure Act.

The reappointment would be effective July 1, 1995 for a term of five years.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Address to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Acton has been the member of the Public and Private Rights Board since July 1, 1990 in his capacity as director of the mediation services branch of the Department of Justice. This arrangement has proven to be very successful. The primary function of both the mediation services branch and the Public and Private Rights Board is dispute resolution.

The Public and Private Rights Board is established under The Expropriation Procedures Act. It assists landowners and expropriating authorities in reaching agreement on the most appropriate route or design of a public improvement. It may also assist in determining what fair and reasonable compensation should be paid for the required land or easement.

Given the analogous nature of the board and mediation services branch, the reappointment of Kenneth Acton as the member of the board is appropriate. As director of the mediation services branch, Mr. Acton manages a mediation system that is one of the most advanced in Canada. Mr. Acton has extensive experience in dispute resolution. He is recognized by his peers throughout Canada and the United States for the leadership role he has taken in the field of dispute resolution.

Mr. Acton's experience has ensured that landowners facing expropriation have access to an enhanced model of dispute resolution. His background in administration has facilitated the effective administration of the board. His work with expropriating parties to encourage them to adopt a more collaborative approach has decreased the number of complaints received by the board. As a result, the operating costs of the board have been reduced during the last five years from approximately \$100,000 to less than \$10,000.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore move, seconded by the member for Regina Churchill Downs:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, recommending that Kenneth W. Acton, of the city of Moose Jaw, in the province of Saskatchewan, be reappointed as the member of the Public and Private Rights Board, effective July 1, 1995,

pursuant to section 6 of The Expropriation Procedure Act.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 21 — An Act to amend The Securities Act, 1988

The Chair: — Before we proceed to clause 1, I would ask the minister, please introduce the officials who have joined us here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Seated to my left is the chairman of the Securities Commission, Marcel de la Gorgendiere, QC (Queen's Counsel). Behind Marcel is Ms. Barbara Shourounis who is the director; and behind me is Dean Murrison who is the deputy director, legal, of the commission.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials, to our deliberations on The Securities Act. I understand the main action of this Bill is to enact a registration system for commodity traders. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could just brief us on how this system will work and how it compares to the system that this legislation will be replacing.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — In a few words, Mr. Chair, the system that will be in effect for commodity trading is the same as the system that is now in effect for the trading in securities generally. And the difference between what will happen under this amendment and what happens now is considerable.

Right now they simply file a notice that they are trading. Under this Bill, they will be required to become registered under the provisions of The Securities Act as other traders in securities must do.

Mr. Toth: — So then what does that do, Mr. Minister? Does that firm up or make our system more accountable? Is that what the intention is under the present legislation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, that's exactly the case. I think the member may recall my telling him, Mr. Chairman, at the last time the Bill was before the House, that these provisions are being included as a result of a request from the industry coming from . . . the request coming from commodity traders on the Winnipeg Exchange. And this will firm up the registration and licensing requirements and is a considerable advance.

Mr. Toth: — You mentioned that it firms up our legislation, and you've also, I believe, the last time talked about the fact that there were discussions with the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange, if I'm not mistaken. What amount of consultations

did you have with either the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange or other security legislators before drafting these changes? And at the present time, are most commodities involved in favour or in agreement with the legislation as it currently exists today?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There has been, I think, an ongoing consultative process that is comprehensive and covers everybody involved. The copies of the proposed amendments have been circulated to the commodities trading industry which is located in . . . centred in Winnipeg in so far as western Canada is concerned.

They have reacted favourably to the structure of the Act, and we have assured them that the regulations that will be developed under the Act will be first of all done in full consultation with them and will be consistent with regulations that are already in place in British Columbia and Alberta.

Mr. Toth: — I believe I did direct a question regarding the power to remove individuals from the boards of companies, any directors with any sort of previous record of fraud. And what I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when this Bill gives the government that power, how does the government know whether they should be recommending or removing a person or a director from a company?

Is it because an individual within the company or another board member or someone has complained and possibly pointed out that a current sitting board member may have at some time before been involved in a fraudulent action that somebody wasn't aware of and then the minister is asked to react to that?

Could you maybe explain that just a little and make it a little clearer, Mr. Minister?

(1430)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, it's important to remember that it is not the government that makes decisions in this area. It is, rather, the commission, which operates independently of government, and this kind of order would not be made without a public hearing. And those hearings are done with due notice to everyone who has an interest in it.

The other thing that I want to point out is that the commission requires police checks with respect to all directors that are involved in an enterprise that's trying to obtain clearance from the commission or registration with the commission, or whatever. And the police checks are done in an effort to pinch off the problem before it happens; to identify any bad actors and keep them out of the picture.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, if . . . I'm not sure whether it would be somebody from the board of directors or someone outside of security would indicate that possibly a board director may have . . . or there may be reasons to believe that an individual should be reviewed or the case reviewed regarding being part of the board, and that review is undertaken.

You mentioned that it comes before a commission before a person is reviewed, if I understood you correctly. So then the commission would actually review all the details. And if they felt that action was needed, they would take it. If not, then it wouldn't be taken.

And I'm bringing that to your attention just from our debate in Justice the other day regarding some of the concerns I have and how charges may be laid or actions may be taken before we really review to see if actions should be taken. So if I understand you correctly, I hear you saying that there will be a review before any open discussion or action or removal of any board member is in place. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The commission has both an administrative side and a decision-making or quasi-judicial side. A lot of matters are dealt with by administrative inquiry or administrative investigation and prospectuses are accepted and all sorts of things are done under the Act simply by the administration of the commission.

With respect to anything where the board is . . . where the commission is empowered to make an order under the Act, where the commission is exercising a power which this Assembly confers upon it, then the commission will have a hearing. That hearing will normally be preceded by an investigation by staff of the commission.

But then the matter proceeds by evidence before the commission and persons are notified, as I indicated in my previous answer. They have a right to appear. They have a right to make representations. And the normal rules that govern quasi-judicial tribunals apply to this tribunal as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I understand the Bill provides for fines for persons involved in security fraud, fines limited to \$1 million, and second, paid to the general fund. I guess the question that most people have is: would that be considered low, to have fines of only \$1 million in view of what some people may lose through fraudulent endeavours, especially in dealing with securities or commodity exchange?

And at the same time, I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if indeed there are situations like this, if a person would end up being charged or convicted or having defrauded the public through illegal actions through the securities or commodities exchange, wouldn't it be more appropriate to put this fund, this money, into a fund that could be used to compensate victims versus just handing it to the minister or to the General Revenue Fund for the Minister of Finance to spend at her leisure?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The million dollars is pretty much standard across the country. There is also a provision in the legislation that will allow the offender to be imprisoned. And in the case of insider trading, the penalty may be a triple . . . triple the profits that are made from the particular transaction, which is another way of looking at the penalty in those kinds of cases.

Across Canada, it is our understanding that fines are paid into the general revenue, and this is pretty standard in other areas other than securities law also.

It has been argued, and I think accepted, that if the commission were to keep the fines itself, along the lines that the member has suggested, then the commission opens itself to an allegation of having . . . or a charge of having an interest in the amount of the fine that goes beyond the mere penalizing of an offence. And the commission then becomes interested in raising its own revenue. And I'm told that that can lead to complications under the charter.

So it's not likely that Canada will get away from the sort of approach that we have here where the fine goes into the general revenue of the province.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, in that case would it be possible to take this money and rather than putting it right directly into the hands of the Securities Commission, set up, if you will, a fund to assist victims of fraud, that would be allowed to maybe maintain a certain level and help with some compensation for loss?

I'm not exactly sure, what avenues do victims have? Is there insurance that a victim could buy for when they enter into securities or when they're buying on the commodity exchange? I'm not exactly sure. But is that a potential or a possibility of building up some kind of, if you will, a trust fund to assist victims of fraud?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There is no such trust arrangements that we're aware of anywhere in Canada, and we have not given any consideration to setting up any sort of assurance fund with respect to the sale of securities. It is very much a private sector activity with the governments, through the securities commissions, simply trying to ensure that the rules respecting fair and honest trading are adhered to. In that respect, a great deal of effort is made to try and keep out the bad guys, people that will be unscrupulous and will take advantage of investors who are looking to make a bunch of money in a hurry. And the member will see that in going through the Act.

I might also mention that the fine system, the fines just don't work. The offenders who are charged are people without any money, and the fines don't get paid. The substantial people in the industry — the registered brokers and the licensed dealers — are substantial people with fairly deep pockets and with insurance and bonding and all sorts of requirements, so that the investor will know that their investment is safe. And that would be very much the case with all of the major trading houses.

So the problem doesn't arise with the established firms, but it arises in the fly-by-night situation that we were discussing the other day, where a small group of hustlers go into a small town and start selling shares in some get-rich-quick scheme, like maybe that they're going to extract gold from the groundwater — which actually happened in a recent case in a small Saskatchewan town — and before anybody knew about it, a

great deal of money had been raised, and it's just gone.

And before the Securities Commission hears about it, it's over and the people have moved on, and the poor investors are just left holding the bag. There's no insurance around to cover that sort of thing. There's nothing they can rely on.

And I'm afraid to have to say that that's appropriate. I mean people should require that these hustlers produce a licence and establish that they are legitimate sales people licensed under this Act, and not just grab at a get-rich-quick scheme and try to make a bunch of money in a hurry. And if they do that, then they're out the money. I don't like to be simplistic about these things, but I don't see why the government should make good their loss in those circumstances.

So we haven't given any consideration to setting up the kind of trust fund that you're mentioning.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm just going to raise one incident that happened locally, and actually it was a former accountant who had built up quite a practice in the community of Moosomin. And had been investing . . . had this little investment company, and all of a sudden pulled the pin. And a lot of people were left holding the bag, because for all they knew they'd been treated fairly over a number of years in their accounting and having their books done. And Revenue Canada certainly didn't find anything wrong with that.

And the unfortunate part, even though through their investments they seemed to be getting the appropriate interest that should be coming, but through further investigation there seemed to be a scheme going on.

But at the same time, how does an individual realize that there may be an incompetent or fraudulent type of person they're dealing with. Up front, everything seems to be kosher and everything seems to be working well and yet for individuals, whether it's 10 or 20 or 30 or \$120,000, that may be a substantial loss in retirement savings that a person was looking at.

And it would seem to me, Mr. Minister, that it might be appropriate to have some kind of a fund established through fines, when charges are raised and fines are levelled and the fines are paid into, that would help compensate. Because not only did the individuals lose their investment, but it costs them money to hire legal counsel only to find at the end of the day, that legal counsel they really couldn't get anywhere either.

(1445)

Because like you say, the person or persons or individuals, whether it's the case I've raised, or other cases where individuals who had no money, were basically declaring bankruptcy and there was no means of trying to recover or recoup that loss.

So I think, Mr. Minister, what I'd like to know is were there any

discussions with regards to victims of fraud as to establishing a type of a trust fund to help compensate victims for loss? Was there any discussion like that taking place, or did you pursue any discussion in that matter?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member. The incident in Moosomin was a very important incident as far as we're concerned. The commission became so concerned about the facts of that particular case that it set in motion a process that resulted in the establishment of rules respecting deposit agents such as the person that the member mentioned in Moosomin.

And as a result, we have a set of rules now that govern all such agents, that requires registration, that requires a sort of a double-check with the companies who is involved. The company who that person is acting as agent for will confirm who their agents are in the province, so we get it from both directions.

And then there is an auditing system that has been established with respect to those deposit agents. And I mention to the member that that's so important because these are the first deposit agent rules in the country developed by our commission as a direct result of that Moosomin experience.

I just remind the member that there isn't enough fine revenue that is collected to fund anything. So that if there is any talk about, any suggestion of, a trust account or some sort of an assurance fund for investors, it would have to be funded from other than the fine revenue. And that would be quite a task, quite an order.

We do however try to do as much in public education as we can, so that investors will know that the first thing they should do is check to see that the person who is ringing their . . . knocking on their door or ringing their doorbell is licensed under The Securities Act. If that person is not, that door should be slammed shut right now.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you just indicated that you didn't think there was enough revenue from fines that would warrant or make it even feasible to set up a trust fund. And I'm not exactly sure if you'd have the type of numbers that would indicate what you would receive or what you may have received through fines to date.

But maybe I could suggest one thing, Mr. Minister. If this might be a potential, maybe we should do a first . . . or made in Saskatchewan, and be the first jurisdiction that might look at that as an option, based on whatever revenues may be available.

And I can also appreciate, if there isn't sufficient in that fund, that any allocations may have to be prorated as well. But maybe it's something to look at in this province and maybe give some leadership in that direction.

One question before we move on. At the end of the Bill, I notice we've exempted this Bill from The Saskatchewan

Evidence Act. And I'd like to know why this was done, how it affects the rights to privacy of Saskatchewan citizens, and what kinds of unusual searches will this allow against individuals.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Sorry to take awhile. It's a technical answer that I give, so I had to take some advice on it.

The banks have been exempted under The Saskatchewan Evidence Act for, I suppose, as long as there's been such an Act. They're under federal jurisdiction, and they are exempt. And then under The Securities Act, as it is at this moment, that exemption from the evidence Act is removed as regards investigations conducted under The Securities Act.

We now propose in this legislation to make the banks fully subject to proceedings under The Securities Act so that their exemption from the evidence Act will not apply to anything that involves The Securities Act. They will fall fully under The Securities Act. That's the answer to your question.

So far as individuals are concerned, the confidential information is protected unless the information is subject to a specific order of the Securities Commission that it be released. But it would normally be confidential.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 75 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for having taken the time to come and review the information before us and the legislation, and I don't know if you left any stone unturned with — what is it? Is it 75 clauses we have?

Hopefully, the other Bills we have in front of us aren't going to take that long, Mr. Minister. But we certainly appreciate the time and your forwardness and the officials for their advice and help. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I too would like to thank our officials. The amount of work that's gone into this Bill is readily apparent looking at its size and its complexity and they have done an excellent job throughout, and I thank them for coming today.

(1500)

Bill No. 54 — An Act to establish an Aboriginal Courtworkers Commission

The Chair: — I would ask that the Minister of Justice please introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm accompanied today by Mr. Darcy McGovern of the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to welcome the minister and his official, Darcy, today.

Mr. Minister, this Bill before us, I believe, if I understand it correctly, you've initiated an aboriginal courtworker program, and I believe it's already started or at least there's an educational process underway as I caught it on the media.

And if I understand it correctly what you're attempting to do is to educate individuals in a matter of law so that they can work with the aboriginal community or their peers as they appear before or in a court to explain the process of law and any charges that may be laid against them, what the implications of those charges may be, and so they can understand before they plead. Is that what we're really working at and do I understand it correctly?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member has got it about right, Mr. Chairman. The kinds of services that a courtworker performed are collected under section 16 of the Act. And these people have received a four-week training course that the member was referring to; some of them have years of related experience. And the program is actually under way. Courtworkers began to appear in Saskatchewan courts to exercise these functions about a week ago.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, does this piece of legislation deal with all aboriginals or are we talking of . . . I just notice under, I believe it's section 16, courtworker services, and (2) it says:

For the purposes of subsection (1), "individual charged with an offence" includes an individual under the age of 18 years (of age)

Are we talking a specific age group or are we talking all aboriginal community?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It applies, Mr. Chair, to all aboriginal people, youth and adults, Indian status and non-status, and Metis.

Mr. Toth: — I note as well, Mr. Minister, under section 17 we've got a section that deals with grant-making powers. And I'm wondering what the purpose or what the intent of this section is and who it may apply to as far as . . . it seems to be we're talking of granting of certain sums of money. And if those sums are to exceed \$10,000 then you need the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council for that. So maybe you could explain that to us and the purpose and the intent of that section in the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, we expect that this will be a very limited power in the sense that the power will be used for very limited purposes. Examples would be supplemental courtworker training or perhaps piloting new approaches to service delivery or some such thing.

The vast bulk of the program will be spent on direct service delivery and there won't be much left to distribute for any of the purposes that I've mentioned. But it none the less is something that the authority, that the commission will . . . may find itself in a situation where it has to do.

I should mention while I'm on my feet about this that the grant-making power does not encompass matters such as providing money for individuals or groups to pay for court costs or that sort of thing.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I notice the Bill also establishes a commission but it doesn't really give us an idea of how many members would constitute the board of the commission or the commission board. I wonder, Mr. Minister, do you have that number in mind and why it isn't in the legislation, or where is it? Did I just not find it or it's not glaringly obvious to me?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It is a board with a flexible size. It will be . . . the size will be determined by agreement from time to time between the groups affected. At the moment it is a five-person board. The board consists of a representative of the FSIN, a representative of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, two representatives from the Justice department, and a Chair.

In the future it may be that other groups will want to become represented on this commission and that's why we've left it to agreement to sort out the size of the commission as we get more experience.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, would it not have been appropriate to maybe have set a minimum and a maximum number of members? And to allow for that to take place, if you did eventually arrive at that maximum number, then possibly looking at reviewing it and expanding it and having that fixed in the legislation?

Also I notice the commission fixes the amounts to be paid to members for their services. Why would you not have taken the time to fix the per diems or the costs or how members' services would be covered as far as travel and time spent in committee or work on the commission or a combination? Why would that not have been at least addressed and laid in here as you would for any, say, other public servant?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — All of these arrangements, Mr. Chairman, were negotiated between Saskatchewan and Canada and the two main aboriginal groups — FSIN and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. As in any negotiation, you perhaps don't always achieve perfection nor do you always achieve a similar result as you would apply in other cases. We think that this is a workable approach to the matter.

With specific reference to the question of payment for services and for expenses, the member will note that the commission's determinations are subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and that, we thought, was enough control over the situation in order to make it manageable.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, that may be the concern we have, regarding the view the Lieutenant Governor in Council may have as to the size. And it might have been appropriate to address the compensation based on what another sector of government may have or the public sector may have for meetings, or even other boards and commissions that may be in existence, and I guess, the fact I think that you've indicated that this has been a discussion that's taken place with another level of government plus a lot of the aboriginal community.

Mr. Minister, if you would have had the ability to set those guidelines and the negotiations were basically between you and the aboriginal community, would you have worked towards establishing some fair guidelines and having them basically limited rather than leaving them as open and as flexible as they are in the legislation as we see it today?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think we would've arrived at a similar system. I think all or almost all of our boards and commissions are set up with the Lieutenant Governor in Council having the statutory power, the statutory responsibility, to set the level of fees or per diems and the way in which the expenses will be dealt with. So we would probably deal with this in a similar way.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, I really don't have further questions. I think there are some questions here, but I think maybe it's appropriate too to allow the process to work. I think it has a lot of potential. And maybe in a year or so we can review the legislation and see how it's worked in the court system. And hopefully it has made the court system just work a lot smoother, especially for the aboriginal community. And I thank you for it.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 17 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 18

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move:

That clause 18 of the printed Bill be amended by adding "of the commission, a courtworker, a courtworker service carrier or agent," after "employee".

I so move.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 18 as amended agreed to.

(1515)

Clause 19

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that we:

Amend Clause 19 of the printed Bill by striking out

clause (e) and substituting the following:

"(e) a courtworker;

"(f) a courtworker service carrier or agent;

"(g) any person appointed by the commission".

I so move, Mr. Chair.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 24 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the minister and his official for having taken the time to spend this time with us reviewing some of the concerns and wish him well in the establishment of this commission. Thank you.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 21 — An Act to amend The Securities Act, 1988

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 54 — An Act to establish an Aboriginal Courtworkers Commission

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Leave granted.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Vote 53

The Chair: — Before we proceed to consideration of item 1, I would ask that the minister please introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Hello. I'd like to introduce the officials who are here with me today. President, Brian Woodcock; senior vice-president, finance and accommodation, John Law; vice-president, commercial services, Al Moffat; and director of financial planning, Rob Isbister.

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Madam Minister, and officials. I'd like to turn first to the globals that we received and inquire as to the differences in the travel allowances from last year to this year. In province, the travel has dropped considerably, about \$500,000. I was wondering what changed within the department that dropped it from last year's totals of 821,000, to 313,00 this year. What are you doing differently or what aren't you doing that was being done before?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Could we have some clarification on exactly which document you're referring to and the numbers?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, last year's globals for '93-94, if I can find the right page here, the cost of travel was \$821,300. This year the travel under the globals are 313,000 for '94-95. I'm wondering what changed in that one year's period that made a decrease of \$500,000, or are some of your numbers wrong here? Because on the globals we received on May 17 of '94 from the previous minister, it's 821,000. The ones we received this year from you are 313,000.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Sorry to take so long. Some of the discussion we were having is because we don't have a list of the things that were included in the previous year's figure compared to the list of things that were included in this year's figure. So what we can do is provide you a detailed breakdown of whether in fact we are comparing apples to apples or not.

There is a factor in there, that there was a deliberate cut-back in the amount of travel, but given the size of the difference, we're going to need to go back and itemize the differences.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. While you're itemizing those differences, can you give us then a breakdown of all of the minister's travel, where they went, what the purpose of the meeting was for, and who attended with those meetings?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, we can do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister. When I say attended, I mean not only the people that were attending the meeting but who travelled from the minister's office or the department to that meeting also. If you would include that, please.

Madam Minister, a number of employees within your organization have come and gone. The numbers that we have for August of '93 was that you employed 900 people. Is that still the case?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In December 31 of '94, if you include permanent, temporary, part time, and contract, it was 945.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. From our last discussions on SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) and your new ministerial assistant, Jill McKeen, we still haven't received her qualification list. I would thank you for the travel, but I haven't received her qualifications though, Madam Minister. If you could please send those over to us.

In August of '93 your government provided a two and a half per cent increase to the salaries for the employees. I believe it was in August of '93. Was that the year that that came into effect? And how long was that period for, that 2.5 per cent salary increase?

(1530)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That was the same as everybody else at that time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I believe at that time there was also a one-time payment to employees earning less than \$12 an hour. What was the purpose of that pay-out and how much did it cost in total? And how much did the average employee receive for that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There were some lower-level adjustments, but we'll have to give you more detail on that. But there was just specific low-end ranges that were brought up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, Madam Minister. When you say low-end wages were brought up, were those employees then that were less than \$12 an hour all raised to above \$12 an hour, as well as receiving a pay-out of some of this form? Or what do you mean, were brought up?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We'll have to provide that information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I think it's very important then, when you're providing this information, that you can give us the breakdown. We need the total costs, how much the average employee paid out, and what was the purpose of it. Hopefully you can provide that though today. What was the purpose of that pay-out? Was it just simply to top up those employees that were below \$12 an hour? What was the reasoning behind providing this additional pay-out over and above the contract?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Those things are specific to the agreement. And I think everybody would feel more comfortable if we gave you the very specific information on the particular adjustments in that agreement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, more than just the particulars on it though, what was the rationale behind it? What was the justification for providing that top-up? You must have had a reason for doing so. If the reason was you felt that

\$12 an hour was not enough, well then say so. But what was the rationale for providing a top-up for those employees who were being paid less than \$12 an hour?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The reasons varied from position to position. It was just part of the negotiating process. And some may have been adjusted to bring them in line with other positions. Some may have been adjusted because they were below the entry level standard. There's a variety of reasons why you adjust. And there wasn't one consistent reason across the board, so they'd have to be specific in terms of the actual agreement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Are there employees then that are employed by SPMC that are below the contract standard, or the entry level as set under the union contract?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We'll check that for you. And if you can just ask again in a little while, we'll just go out and check that; then you'll have it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. There certainly seems to be a lot of confusion over there as to the contract you signed with the SPMC employees. And I find that very surprising.

My interpretations of a union agreement of a contract were that it was fairly settled, fairly hidebound; in fact that everything was spelled out — you will do this, supply that, so forth and so on in return for the labour services provided to you by your employees.

And yet this seems to be pretty loose here in what you're doing. I think there needs to be certainly some more information provided, Madam Minister. But we'll leave that while your official is gone looking for the information.

You've gone through a number of changes within your department — personnel coming and going; some of them were temporaries and casual employees, but a number of them were also permanent. The employees that have moved on from SPMC, according to the globals, how many of them continue to work within government organizations, be it within another department or a Crown corporation?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Most of the people who left — actually it was retirements or early retirements. So we think there's maybe two that have gone on to other work in the government and the rest would have retired.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Can you indicate which two those would be that have gone on within the government? I see a number here that have resigned or quite a number of them that have resigned. There's a number that have taken early retirement or appointments were no longer valid, etc. So I wonder if you can indicate which two of your knowledge that went on.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's difficult to know what happens to people who resign because we'd have to hunt through every name of every employee in the government. But we can give you a more specific list if you would like to give us the time to do that research.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister, I'll take you up on that. But I'd also like to bring forward the names of four that you might happen to remember if and where they're working within government: S. Caragata, who was a ministerial assistant 2; T. Harding, a ministerial assistant; A. Thomson, ministerial assistant 4; S. Weir, ministerial assistant 4.

Now I'm sure that . . . I'm not sure if they worked in your office but they worked in the previous minister's office, if not in yours. They have resigned as of April 30, '94; June 30, '94; November 1, '94; and August 21, '94. So if you could respond about any of those, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, I can tell you where those individuals are. Tricia Harding is within the Minister of Economic Development's office; Sean Caragata within the Premier's office; A. Thomson within the Gaming Corporation; and S. Weir left the province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's three out of four that have just simply moved within the government organization and it would be interesting to see what changes there were in their salary structures as those movements were made. I would like if you could indicate please which other ones within these lists that may have resigned and gone on to some other employment some place else within the government, if you would, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We can undertake to do that but I would note to the member that if they have moved on to other jobs, their wages would be commensurate with the wages offered for those positions.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to question about your advertising. There don't seem to be any page numbers on here, so I can't give you a page number on the globals. But it deals with Fieldstone Marketing for \$133,000. I wonder if you could indicate what that was for.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In regards to Fieldstone communications, sales and salvage ads, 54,328; building tender ads, 56,936; and other general ads, 22,071, for a total of 133,335.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. When you're doing these sales, advertising for sales and salvage, how broad or how extensive do you advertise those? Do you do them in the two dailies? Do you do that on radio, television? What kind of advertising are you buying for \$54,000?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The advertising is done primarily in the weeklies. There's no radio or anything like that. And eight to

ten auctions were held last year, and we advertise about two weeks in advance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Would you cover the entire province then with those ads, or do you do that . . . Say there's a sale in Swift Current, would you advertise in the south-west then, but would you also advertise that same sale in Yorkton or Hudson Bay or P.A.?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, it's pretty much around the province coverage. There might be — when there's differentials and equipment in different places — a little more emphasis in the actual area where it's being sold, but the whole province gets coverage.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Dealing with some of the buildings that are involved with SPMC, are you responsible for the Sask Crop Insurance head office in Melville?

(1545)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We're responsible for that Crop Insurance space.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When will the lease expire on that particular building, and will you be renewing it?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — January 31, 2002. We may both live to see it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I don't know about you, but I plan on living that long.

So we don't have to worry about a renewal in the near future. Okay.

Madam Minister, the numbers that you have here under personnel for salaries, does that include all of the pensions and benefits that would be payable to those employees?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The 33 million number includes all benefits.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I wonder if you would have any breakdown though on how much would be then for pensions and how much would be for benefits out of that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The pension number is about 1.2 million.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. How about the benefit package? Is that included in that, and how does that number work in there?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — About another 1.9 million would be the global other benefits.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. SPMC has from time to time become involved in a number of court cases. I wonder if you could indicate to us what cases you have ongoing and how much you have spent on legal actions.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The total amount spent on those would be 48,920. And those would be basically two kinds of legal costs — one would be related to staffing issues and the other would be related to injuries, or those kinds of things.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When you talk about staffing issues, are you talking about searching a staff member's background for hiring or for dismissal, or exactly what are you talking about when you're talking about staffing issues?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Dismissal or grievance preparation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are these cases that are ongoing from year to year or are they new cases that have come forward this year? And of those cases that you may have had in place last year, how many of those were settled?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's about 80 per cent carry-over from last year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Of the . . . I believe there was 30 individuals that were dismissed following the '91 election or closely thereafter. How many of those cases are ongoing and how many of them are settled?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's one left that we think is in the final stages of settlement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You say you have one left that's in the final stages, of the 30 that were initiated from the 1991? Okay, thank you very much.

I wonder if you can give some indication of what kind of settlements you arrived at with these — with the 29 others that were dealt with. I realize you may have some concerns about that, but there's just the two of us really listening to this, so you shouldn't have a major concern about that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would vary widely for various people because it's based on age, level of responsibility, and years of service. So it would vary according to all those factors.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In comparison to what was offered initially to most of those employees at their termination, is the settlement lower, the same, or higher?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It appears that we reached a compromise in these situations, although not all 30 were resolved in this manner. Generally they received less than they wanted but a little more than we wanted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I guess that's part of the negotiations. Everybody asks for different things, and while everybody may, that be their Utopia solution, don't always get it. So would they have received 20 per cent higher than what the initial offer had been from the government, 50 per cent, 75? Can you give us some ballpark percentages?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The negotiations usually take place within a 25 per cent variance range between our position and their position. And again, to point out that the majority were settled not through legal processes but just through a negotiation process.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. A question about another building. SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) is no longer or is being wound down. I'm not sure if they're still operating to a limited degree or not. Does SPMC control or look after the SEDCO building up on Broad Street?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Winnipeg or Broad Street?

An Hon. Member: — Winnipeg.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay. No, SEDCO still has it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Never having been there, I wasn't exactly sure what street it was on.

Madam Minister, if we can go back now to the travel. Your staff person has returned hopefully with the answers to that, to the half a million dollar difference in the travel. Perhaps you can provide some clarification on that now.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We're back with the answer on the personnel question. And if you'd like that one, we could provide that.

During the contract negotiations, the 2.5 per cent that was available, they made the decision to apply it more to that category of worker rather than to apply it thinly across the board. And so it was used to bring those positions up over the \$12 mark. And they would be mostly the general service worker category.

Now since that time there's been some new entry level people. And that wasn't a permanent adjustment to the entry level rate. It was merely the application of the 2.5 per cent within that particular system at that time. So there still are people entering who are entering lower than the \$12 rate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The people that were prior to '93 or summer of '93 under the old contract that were below the \$12, were their salaries raised henceforth to over \$12 permanently, or were they simply given a one-time pay-out?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They went there and they stayed there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Then is this going to be a precedent set for future contracts, that everyone that SPMC hires that's below the \$12 level, the next time the contract comes up for renegotiations will automatically be bumped up to the \$12-plus and then you'll continue to hire somebody else down at less than \$12? And perhaps you could indicate what salary they're receiving that is less than \$12 — is it 11.50 or 11.90 or \$8, or where is it, Madam Minister?

(1600)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We'd have to get the specific wage rates. But always in bargaining, it depends on what the mandate is on both sides of the bargaining table. And so let's say for example, if the mandate was zero, well zero applied anywhere would still be zero. So it really does depend on the particular mandate at the particular time that that contract is bargained.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, if it's zero then it's zero for everybody. But if it's .01 you could take that over the entire . . . your figure here shows 1,025 employees; you said that you now have 945. You could take that .01 per cent over the whole area and give it just to those that were less than \$12, because you've now set the precedent of bumping up those that are less than \$12. So I think you've set a precedent there for yourselves that you're going to have to deal with on this.

On the travel, Madam Minister, perhaps you can answer this one. It's \$48,000 this year for the '94-95 year that we were dealing with for out-of-province travel, whereas the previous year was \$27,000. Can you give us some indication of what that was about? Why the doubling of those numbers?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We will provide you with details on this.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Will you give us the commitment then, that if we have further questions related to your travel, that you will supply us the answers with them? Because you're pretty vague today on answers on travel questions.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Certainly we will.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, is your department responsible, or SPMC responsible, for student summer employment?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The department has its own summer student program, but they're not responsible beyond that.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying is the normal student summer employment program — the one which students apply to if they're going back to university or some other form of education — is not under SPMC?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is SPMC. That's PSC (Public Service Commission) that does that.

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 53 agreed to.

The Chair: — Did you want to thank your officials or anything?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd like to thank my officials for attending today and assisting me with these responses.

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to please introduce the officials that have joined us today.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Today with us to assist in the deliberations are Mr. Duane Adams, the deputy minister of Health; Ms. Kathy Langlois, executive director of finance and management services; Ms. Lorraine Hill, associate deputy minister; Mr. Steve Petz, associate deputy minister; Ms. Glenda Yeates, associate deputy minister; Ms. Maureen Yeske, executive director, health planning and policy development; Ms. Carol Klassen, executive director of strategic programs; and Ms. Lois Borden, executive director of district support.

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a few questions today about health in general, but more specifically I want to talk to you about health care problems in my own constituency. I think the people there would like to have some answers to some of the questions that they have been asking.

But first of all, I understand that there is a liaison person that has been appointed for each of the health boards in the province, and that that person's role is to coordinate decisions by the local boards with government policy.

If that is so, then I would ask you if you could give me the name of the liaison person that works for the Southwest Health Board.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the member is asking about the consultant who comes from the department that works with the district. In the case of Southwest it's Ms. Dawn Smyth.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, Dawn Smyth, I'm told, was formerly nee McFadden. And we have a report that this person is coordinating through an office in Maple Creek, the town of Maple Creek, but that this person does in fact live in Alberta on an acreage near Medicine Hat.

Is there any policy in this government that employees of the government working with communities in our province must live within the province while they are working for the

province? And if not, why would that not be?

And also we have a report that this person does her work, as a common practice, through the use of SaskTel's new, modern day technology, which is called call forwarding; and that in fact the office in Maple Creek is call-forwarded to a home in the Medicine Hat district; and that in fact the business of this liaison person is conducted out of her private home in Alberta. Is there any truth to that rumour, report, that we have been given?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, there may be some aspects of the member's question we'll have to follow up on for detail. Those of us who are here in the House today understand the individual that he wishes to discuss was very, very recently, was very recently married. Married an individual who lives on the Alberta side of the border, and I think, understandably, wants to reside with her husband.

There is no policy *per se* which prohibits this. I would expect that one could travel up and down the borders on either side of the province, Manitoba and Alberta, and find similar circumstances. I expect you would find it certainly around the Lloydminster district. And so there's no strict policy which says that every employee of the Government of Saskatchewan, or for that matter of the Department of Health, must reside within the confines of the province.

In this case, I think, as I would suggest, that true love doesn't know the definition of a border, and I understand these folks have been married, and they're residing in Alberta. But Ms. Smyth is doing very good work for us while she's at work in the district in the province.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Minister, we have absolutely no concern whatsoever with true love or with this lady's marital status. We do have concern though for the several calls that we've received in our office, all stating basically the same thing — I am a member of the health care system and cannot possibly have my name used or I'll lose my job. But we have a serious situation where an individual is hired by a provincial government, doing a job supposedly in Saskatchewan, and resides outside of the province; and in fact has an office that is not often times able to be accessed because the doors are not open.

And in fact, when the numbers are phoned to try to access the individual who's supposed to be doing the work in that area, there is an answer. And the answer to that whole scenario is call forwarding. Is it common practice for your government to allow individuals to call forward their office numbers to their homes so that they can conduct their business from their homes instead of out of their offices?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the member makes all sorts of accusations here. Let me try and explain what I understand of the situation. The individual is the consultant, not for just one health district but in fact for two — both the Southwest District and the Rolling Hills District — and the member will well

know the kind of geography that she'll have to deal with, as he does. And I'm sure that he's not in his office eight hours of every day, nor would I suggest that he should be.

This consultant will be doing a fair bit of travelling within the district. And in addition, to keep that proper liaison function, the consultants are regularly into meetings here in Regina or meetings with their fellow consultants. And so there will be, I think, some appropriate time that is spent away from the office. Now in efforts to remain accessible to those who will need to speak to the consultant, we do ask that our consultants do provide a call-forwarding service so that they're not inaccessible when on the road or when in Regina.

(1615)

We do have a policy — and I underline this for the member — that work is not conducted at home. If in fact the home number is being used as a call forward — and I'm not sure of that — but if in fact that is the case, then the calls will be received on personal time, and I think therefore, is above and beyond the call of what her duties may imply; that she's using some of her personal time then to be accessible to people.

But I want to reaffirm that this is an individual who is serving two health districts, which will cause her, I'm sure, to be on the road a significant bit of time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, these are not accusations that I'm making. These are accusations that I'm delivering to you from my constituents, and the comparison you make between my office is hardly relevant to here whatsoever. My secretary is in my office and she will do her job effectively and efficiently, and if she doesn't do that we would see to it that somebody else took her position.

And I think maybe you will have to look into this matter for the people of the south-west who are very concerned that there is an impropriety here. And I think that what we're trying to do here is to bring this matter to your attention so that you will in fact do that and straighten out this situation.

Because obviously, as you said, the geography of our area dictates that you have to travel an awful lot of miles in order to conduct the job that this person has been assigned to. It makes it immeasurably worse if you start with the premiss that you're going to drive from Medicine Hat in order to start accessing Saskatchewan with an hour's drive before you start embarking on your job which entails probably an area the size of Switzerland.

And so, Minister, it is very critical that we get to the root of this problem and have it resolved. I have no objection to a person being on the road doing their work and having a cell phone or whatever it is, but the truth of the matter is then that there should be at least a sign on the door saying someone will be in this office one day a week, one hour a week, at least some time during the week — at least some kind of an indication of an accessibility. And apparently that service is not being provided.

So I suggest to you that you should have a chat with these people and see if you can't provide the service that is needed out there. And realistically, I don't — living close to Alberta — blame this person or anybody else for wanting to move out of Saskatchewan if they have a chance to. I mean you've got all the benefits of both sides of it. You've got your cake and you can eat it.

You simply move to Medicine Hat, have a good-paying job in Saskatchewan, pay no sales tax over there on the stuff that you buy, have cheap taxes on your home, you enjoy all the benefits of a good government in Alberta, while in fact you get paid a government salary from Saskatchewan. Well, Minister, that's a pretty attractive way to live and I really can't say that I criticize the person for doing that if they can get away with it. But I don't think it should be allowed at the expense of doing the job properly.

So I will await your comments on how you intend on handling this matter, and whether or not you plan to get to the root problem.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, even as we speak someone is making contact with the individual that the member raises these concerns about. And in that regard, we will be following up to see if in fact there is a problem. So I'll make that commitment to him.

And in fact it's happening right now. We'll be talking with the individual and people involved and we'll find out the truth of the matter.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that and I take you at your word, not only because of your past profession but because I know very well that there now has to be an election coming if you're going to put out a prairie fire that fast politically; it's got to be getting close. That probably will prompt you to do a good and effective job of checking this out and resolving the problem. So I'll leave that area and go on with a couple of other problems that we have in the south-west.

We have in the town of Gull Lake, as your officials will be aware, if you're not yourself personally, we have a hospital building there that was reconstructed at considerable amount of cost. A lot of community money went into the project, along with a lot of government money and taxpayer dollars. A lot of local money was raised through taxation and is continuing this very day to be raised on a continuing basis to pay off the arrears that were built up as a result of having to do that project.

That building of course becomes, under your new health program, nothing more than a band-aid station. And we have of course a couple of rooms that are basically used in the entire building. The rest of the building, at several hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditure, sits basically unused and empty.

The people in our community think that that is a crying shame

when we hear about buildings in other areas that are basically ready to fall down, or so people say, that people have to be put into and are being used in order to provide special kinds of treatment and special kinds of housing for different levels of sick people. The folks in that community are suggesting that this building, being in such good shape, ought to be utilized and that perhaps some kind of a plan should be in focus to provide this building be used for a special care home, for perhaps a special home for people with Alzheimer's disease or palliative care or something like that.

And so my question for the people of the Gull Lake community is simply this: is there any plan presently afoot to utilize this building and put it to some good use?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I would want to disagree with the member when he wants to characterize the facility in Gull Lake and the programing that is happening there as simply a band-aid station. That's just not the case.

The programs and services which are available in the facility include emergency services, observation and assessment beds, foot chiropody clinics. Wellness clinics are being held in the building. The health nurse is on call when the building is not open. And as he will well know, there is an ambulance in Gull Lake, and there is a resident physician in the community. Certainly the program in Gull Lake is something more than a band-aid station.

Mr. Chair, the Rolling Hills District will work with the community of Gull Lake to look at that facility — but perhaps more importantly, not to just look at the structure of the facility and the building itself, but to look at the whole needs and programing needs in that community. Buildings must simply be part of programing. The district board will work with the community, as they have done and will well into the future, to assess the needs and develop the appropriate programing and services both within that facility and beyond that facility in the community.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, you can nit-pick all you like about my phraseology in terms of describing what the facility is and how it's being used. But the people of Gull Lake and area know exactly what's going on, irregardless of how I choose my words.

And what they know for a fact is that the service that we get is excellent. We have a good doctor and we've got good nurses that work there. And there's no complaint about that at all, except that when you compare it to the service that we used to have, it becomes in real terms, by comparison and metaphorically speaking, nothing more than a band-aid station compared to what we used to have.

Now we've got a big building there that is very good. It's been redesigned and rebuilt, and it's not being utilized. And irregardless of the long list of things that you have put together that the building is being used for, the truth of the matter is that all of those functions come out of basically one large lobby and

maybe two rooms, though possibly three if you want to stretch it. But I mean that is a whole hospital building with wings that are absolutely empty that could be used to put people in, people with needs right at this moment.

We've had requests from people in the area for a home for specifically Alzheimer's patients. Now that's one alternative, and I know there are probably a dozen. But I make this specific point to you for the sake of argument. Is there any plan to utilize the rest of that building for some useful purpose?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think to accurately reflect the situation not only in Gull Lake but in communities across the province where former acute care beds and centres have been converted, across the province in those communities and with those districts alternative use of the facilities are being explored.

Now what is appropriate for Gull Lake today? That answer I don't have with me. Nor do I believe there is an answer in place. But what I do know is that the district boards work closely with those communities and will look at the facilities. But more importantly, and you see this is where the change has happened — it's a change that has not yet seemed to affect the thinking of the members opposite — that we're moving away from a physical structure, building mentality to look at needs and how do we meet the needs, the real needs in communities. And if there are needs in the community of Gull Lake or in any other community of the province that can be met through a physical building and programing within a building, then we'd want to look at that.

But many of the needs were not being met by the physical building — not being met by the buildings. They need programing that brings the programs and the services closer to people. That's the work that's going on. It won't all be accomplished by the end of this month or by the end of next month or by the end of this year. It'll take many, many years. But that's the direction we're moving.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, you've stated your position and the direction you're moving in. We'll let the people judge that shortly, I'm sure. The truth of the matter is though, that I don't think anybody in the Gull Lake area is going to ever agree with you that it's a good idea to treat sick patients in the ditch.

You're going to have to put them in a building some place and call it a hospital if you like, call it a storage facility for sick people. Call it what you will, but it will be a building, because in Saskatchewan you're not going to have sick people laying on the roads or out on the lawns; you're going to put them in a building. So your statement that you're moving away from physical buildings in health care is preposterous, because you do need buildings that are properly repaired, properly upkept, and properly meet the health standards and health needs.

And you have a perfectly fine building in the town of Gull Lake that goes unused to the large extent. And while you're using it for some things, there's an awful lot more that could and should

be done with it. Your answer simply tells me that you don't have a plan. You haven't got a plan and you have no idea what you're going to do. Your health plan is a total disaster with no direction, no plan. You're just dumping the responsibility onto local health boards, hoping to duck the political pressure of its failure.

Well, Minister, I think that in due course the responsibility of health care will come to your doorstep because you are the minister and you're supposed to know what's going on and you're supposed to have a plan. People expect that. And when you indicate that you don't have, you will pay the price, answering for your job when the time comes for you to ask them to rehire you, which will be in the next election.

The town of Maple Creek, Minister, has a special care home that has been around for a very, very long time. Many, many people have called our office and asked us if there's any way at all that they could get a new special care home because this one quite frankly, they say, is wore out. I've been there and their statements, while are probably a little overemphasized in terms of saying wore out, they are not out of line by saying that; it's very close to that. And while you can continue to say to a building, well it'll last a little longer, it'll last a little longer and make that happen, the reality is that at a certain time in history you have to draw the line and say, this building is no longer useful and functional; today we're going to tear it down and have a new one.

I think that point has come and gone realistically. But I want to ask you, do you have any plans to rebuild this care home in the town of Maple Creek for the people there?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, to start at the bottom and work back, we're not aware here in the House this afternoon that there has been any specific request to the district board in Maple Creek, or certainly none from the district board to the province in terms of new capital construction.

Mr. Chair, you will well know that in fact, where the need is shown, that we are continuing to approve new capital projects given the financial constraints of the budget. We are approving new projects. There have been a number of projects approved and some coming to completion in the long-term care sector this year.

I am not aware that there has been the request from the district or from the community in regard to a new construction. If the need is there, then there is a process of assessment and prioritization. The member will well know that you can't do everything at once. And we would look at that request as we would look at any request from any community in the province.

Now the member a few moments ago talked about how good it was in Alberta. He talked about how good it was in Alberta. He talked about how good a government they're offering in Alberta.

Now I'm not going to get into a lengthy conversation about what's happening in Alberta these days. But if he is concerned about acute care closures in this province, then he should just take a little trip across the border and see what his friend Ralph Klein's doing in Alberta in terms of acute-care bed closures in urban and rural Alberta. Cutting in an unprecedented manner, far beyond any cuts that were undertaken in this province. Now that's the good, Conservative government of his friends in Alberta.

Now the member from Moosomin wants to get into it; maybe he'd like to defend Mr. Klein. He talks about the ridiculous kind of comment, talking about people going to be left in ditches. Now that kind of rhetoric, Mr. Chair, tells me it is pre-election. And the members over there are so desperate to save his seat — because it's one of the few they have a chance at, I think — that now they'll engage in this kind of rhetoric in the legislature. Now I ask the member to just take a look in Alberta if he wants to see acute-care bed cutting.

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, I had told my colleague that I was finished questioning but your comments just have to have an answer and a response. Because truth of the matter is, Minister, that you allude to the election probably being close by and that sort of thing and I happen to know that your seat is not as safe as mine is. So I just wanted to let you know that the United Church in Gull Lake is looking for a pastor in case you happen to need a relocation.

But the reality is that you've alluded to Maple Creek not having made any formal applications for a new lodge or a new care home. And I guess there are two buildings there that house our seniors in different capacities of their stages of health. Both are very old and both do need to be replaced.

So I stand here in my place today telling you that we are formally making a request to you to build two new facilities in Maple Creek to accommodate the needs of those people in that community. So in case you have never heard about it before, as you have suggested . . . and that really does surprise me because I just can't imagine that the people there wouldn't have made the formal applications and the comments necessary to bring this matter to an awareness in your department and to yourself.

But just in case all that has slipped past you, consider this to be our formal request, that we need these facilities in Maple Creek. So don't come and say to us later on now that you have never heard about it and you don't know anything about it, because it's a fact of life that it's needed and it is a serious, serious request on behalf of the people of that community. And I'm sure that they've made that request themselves.

And realistically, Minister, I know that time is money and so I'm going to turn this matter over to my colleague after you comment.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I frankly wish the member, when he says time is money, he might have thought about that

when we were debating some other issues in this House in the last session and in this one, when he kept us entertained for hours and hours and hours personally.

Mr. Chair, I think we need to put on the record here — because the member opened this line of questioning this afternoon with some accusations about our district consultant in the Rolling Hills and Southwest District, Ms. Dawn Smyth, formerly Dawn McFadden — I want to put on the record, Mr. Chair, because we have followed up, that her phone is never forwarded to her home, her married home in Alberta; that there is a message machine which is available at her office. She covers all the costs and time driving from the border to her home, personally covering all those costs; and, Mr. Chair, she maintains a residence in Maple Creek. And I hope that will satisfy the member for the information that he was requesting.

And again, in terms of the facilities in Maple Creek, I suspect that the member, like many members, appropriately would want to come to the Department of Health, the Minister of Health, the legislature, and lobby on behalf of facilities in their own constituency. But he should know that there will be facilities in other of his colleagues' constituencies, indeed in constituencies across the province, that may well over the course of the next few years need to be replaced or renewed.

The only way that any government can deal with this is to look at all of the requests and establish a system of priorities so that you know, with the limited resources that you have, that you're putting them to where they are needed the most. And so if there is a request from Maple Creek, we will look at that as we would look at any request from any community in the province.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister and his officials. Mr. Minister, I have some questions that I basically had in the estimates file for a little while, and I keep getting notes from my staff that . . . please ask those questions, questions that have arisen as people have been watching the debate. And so I'd like to get these questions on the record and get a response.

What I'll do, Mr. Minister, some of these have a number of different questions, and I'll try to read them in a fashion, that rather than up and down maybe six or seven times for the same individuals, try and get all the questions related and then a response from you.

The first question comes from a gentleman who would like to know what date the government eliminated level 1 and 2 funding for senior care homes. And then subsequent questions arising from that is he would like to know how much money goes toward paying for senior care, how much the government subsidizes seniors presently in senior care homes. How much did the government subsidize seniors previously to eliminating levels 1 and 2 funding? As well, is the government building any senior care homes presently, and if so, will any include those seniors who are level 1 and 2? And for those seniors in need of receiving home care, how much does a senior pay? How much does the government pay per individual? How much in total

does the government spend on home care?

Is that too many all at once? You can fill me in, Mr. Minister, on the ones that you caught, and then we'll get back to the others.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'll start on the list and see where it takes us. This is a long list. I know I won't get right down to the bottom of it, but we'll start.

In terms of level 1 and 2 funding . . . and I believe the member's question was, what was the date of the elimination of that funding? Mr. Chair, the funding itself has not been eliminated.

We are phasing out from subsidizing level 1 and 2, but the same dollar amounts that were used to subsidize level 1 and 2 have been left with the districts. The money has not been taken and it is being redirected both into meeting the needs of level 3 and 4, the heavier care needs, and some directed into community services. So the money has not been eliminated; what is being eliminated in a phased-in approach is the subsidies to those who have lived in levels 1 and 2.

Now the question I think that followed was how much of the Health budget is being spent on seniors and that's a little difficult to give an exact amount . . . or on special care homes. Our long-term care services budget for this year is 250.923 million — so almost \$251 million for long-term care services.

Our home-based services — many of them will be available to seniors, not exclusively, but many of them — is budgeted at sixty million, seven hundred and ninety-four thousand . . . hundred thousand.

And then our community services — again many of them will be for seniors — is eighty-three million and sixty-one. Our acute and rehab services budget is 550 million and a good portion of that will go to seniors. The specific budget item that talks about long-term care, long-term services, is a budget item of about \$251 million.

One of the questions was, are we building any special care homes? The answer is yes. There's one coming, I know very well, coming very near to completion in my own city of Moose Jaw — Providence Place — which will bring together long-term care and other new programming, geriatric assessment, day hospital and adult hospital, and so on.

I think somebody now will be finding us the actual home care fees and that sort of information.

Mr. Chair, in terms of resident charges and fees — and this will apply to level 2, 3, or 4, straight across the board — the charges are based on an annual income, and so the higher your income, the higher the charge.

And I can just read the most recent charges. If your monthly income — and this would take into account all sources of income, interest earnings and pensions and so on — if your

monthly income is \$874, then your charge will be 743; if your monthly income is 900, it'll be 756; if your income is a thousand, the charge would be \$806; if your income is \$1,100, it would be \$856; if your income is \$1,200, it will be \$906; if your income is \$1,309 or more, you will be paying \$961.

And so that's the range of fees within the level 2, 3, and 4. They would range from a minimum of \$743 to a maximum of \$961. And that would be the monthly charge.

We have the information on the home care fees. Now under the current policies there are no home care client charges for nursing, for therapy, case management, or volunteer services. There are charges for home-making, which might include personal care and respite, Meals on Wheels, and home maintenance.

For all the chargeable services, the client will pay for the first 10 units. A unit of service is defined as one hour of home-making or home maintenance or one meal. The current charge for the first 10 units is \$5.70 per unit. After 10 units the client is charged a unit rate to a maximum monthly charge, corresponding to the client's adjusted monthly income. And so you reach a maximum monthly. If you're on social assistance in the province, if your income is very basic and very low, the maximum monthly charge will be \$57. The maximum charge at the top end will be the lesser of the client's adjusted monthly income or \$345.

(1645)

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, did you give me how much in total the government spends on home care? I just don't remember if that was one of the numbers you gave.

And what the government would pay per individual, I take it from the last response that can vary as to income. And secondly, one question in here, it says, how much does the government . . . how much the government subsidizes seniors presently in senior care homes. I think what we're looking at here, what is the total cost to provide for a senior in a care home, per client or per individual? And then we can determine out of that, from the numbers you already gave us, what the client would pay and what the government would pay. What's the total cost per individual to maintain or to live in a seniors' care home?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The actual — and this will be shown in the blue book — the actual home-based services budget this year will be \$60.794 million. So \$60 million, but that may not encompass all of the services that are being . . . like we also have a budget called community services which is an \$83 million budget. But strictly on home care or home-based services we budgeted \$60.794 million.

And then in terms of the subsidy for someone who is in level 2, 3 or 4, with the rates that I spoke of earlier, if we just averaged it out to about \$1,000 a month . . . Some are lower. Some are a little higher. But let's just say it's about \$1,000 a month that the

individual would contribute. The actual cost would be closer to \$3,000 a month to provide the facility, the bed, the care. And so it's about \$2,000 a month subsidy from the government, from the taxpayer, to subsidize the bed. On an annual basis we're looking at about a \$24,000 to \$25,000 a year subsidy.

Mr. Toth: — This question comes regarding a . . . Actually our office was contacted by a woman named Carol Ekel — I believe that's how you pronounce it — E-k-e-l-l. And Ms. Ekel was visiting in her back yard with Sherry Mercereau two years ago when Sherry's husband threatened both women and killed Sherry and himself in front of Carol. And you may remember this took place in Saskatoon. The detective on the case referred Carol to victims services because he said she would clearly need counselling. She was told by victims services that she wasn't a victim and that she should get counselling on her own.

Mrs. Eckell has suffered from depression, nightmares, and many other effects since the incident. The lawyer has written to the Health department requesting help, and as of yet Carol has received none. Mr. Minister, will you ensure that this situation is looked into and that Carol Eckell receives the counselling she needs?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I commit that we will look into it. I can't commit to an outcome without having some further background, but we'll certainly look into it.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and certainly I can send you a copy of these questions as these were taken of concerns raised over the phone, and maybe follow up in that manner.

Another individual had called us and said, I have another question from a senior citizen regarding the prescription drug plan. This gentleman's drugs cost him \$1,450 each year, and he is having great difficulty paying for them. When he phoned the Health department for assistance, he was informed that unless all of his RRSPs (registered retirement savings plan) and investments were tapped dry, that he would not be eligible for any assistance.

Is this indeed the case, Mr. Minister, that people have to have no resources before they can get help paying the high cost of prescription drugs?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, Mr. Chair, that's not true. I would encourage the individual, if you're in contact again, to reconnect or . . . There's some misunderstanding here. The drug plan is based on income. We've tried to tailor . . . the higher your income the lower your support, but it's based on income; it's not based on assets. Now if one has RRSPs or other sources of income, that will show as part of generated income, but it's certainly not based on assets. So I would encourage the individual or those who are in touch with him to be in touch with the drug plan again.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Our office was also informed about an incident that happened recently regarding an ambulance trip. A pregnant woman was being rushed to the

hospital while her husband was following the ambulance in his car. The ambulance hit an elk and unfortunately had no backup phone to seek help. Luckily the husband had a cell phone in his car and was able to phone for backup.

Question, what is the . . . and there's three questions here. I'll give them all. What is the procedure for rural ambulances in this regard? Is it standard for ambulances not to have cell phones in rural Saskatchewan? And what about dead areas where there is no cellular reception?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, it's my understanding that ambulances use a variety of means of communication. Most, if not all of them, will be using a dedicated radio frequency, will be using not cellular communication but a radio frequency which would mean an access to most everywhere in the province. Now there may be a few dead spots, and so I'm not . . .

In terms of the circumstance the member raises, I don't know the particulars. I can't really comment on it. Some ambulances now are carrying the cell phones where the network would provide. But of course we still have some ways to go yet to get total cell coverage for the province. Although we're working at it, made some great strides forward, but there's still a fair bit to do there.

And then I was very pleased just a couple of weeks ago to announce a pilot project, one up in the north-west around North Battleford in the north-west and one down in the south-west where the emergency providers of all sorts — ambulance, fire, police — are coming together in a pilot project using the newest technology which is fleet net technology which will enable clear communications among all of the providers in a common radio network.

The circumstance, if the member has more detail about that particular circumstance . . . I'm just not able to answer this afternoon why their radio communication wouldn't be available. I know in certain areas of the province cell communication wouldn't be available anyway, but many ambulances now do have cell phones aboard.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, a quick question. Does the department have a policy or guidelines regarding ambulatory service and communication equipment that must be part of the ambulance and part of their equipment?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, Mr. Chair. We have quite extensive, I think, descriptions of what must be within the confines of an ambulance.

Mr. Toth: — Another individual who was watching one evening . . . and some of these questions come back. I think it's about three or four weeks when we were up and we were discussing seniors' care, and the following question came to us. If someone was 84 years old, can't live alone, can't get 24-hour day care home care, can't stay in a hospital more than a certain number of days, where do they go and what do they do?

And then the following was added afterwards. How can you justify healthy 20-year-olds receiving welfare payments and then make cuts that affect the elderly so drastically, elderly who supported themselves and contributed to society and your government all their lives?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, in regard to any person of our province who has a need for services, that need should be appropriately assessed. In this case I would suggest if that individual would return either to his or her physician or his or her district office to undergo the proper needs assessment.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, another individual writes or phoned in and would like to ask the following question regarding the Parkland health centre board. How many lay-offs were there in Hafford, how many in Spiritwood, and in other facilities in the district?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we don't have the exact numbers. We'll get them and get them to the member.

Mr. Toth: — Another individual writes . . . I was contacted by a nurse who had 14 years of experience in her field, most of which were earned in Moose Jaw since 1991. She briefly moved out of the province between '91 to '93 and upon her return, once again applied to be a nurse in her health district. She was told that she would no doubt, quote, not be rehired in the Thunder Creek health care district because I was not practising in this district when health care reform took place. Why would this be, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — There may be, Mr. Chair — and again, without knowing the specifics, it's a little hard to comment — there may be a variety of issues here. In some of the districts where there has been some reductions in staffing, they have made commitments to try and hire back, first of all, individuals who have lost their employment within the district. So there may be some local recall provisions here. There may well also be some bumping provisions because of contractual arrangements and so on. Without the specifics, I don't think I can say much more.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee report progress.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.