

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again on behalf of many concerned citizens about the Plains Health Centre:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly might be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The signatures come from Regina, come from Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, from Weyburn, from Trossachs, Yellow Grass, and many small communities in southern Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions of hundreds of names regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Numerous people from throughout southern Saskatchewan, Regina, have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan assembled, I have a petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan that humbly showeth that the government has failed to address the serious concerns of the landlords who provide rental accommodation to Saskatchewan renters:

Wherefore our petitioners humbly pray that you Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take action to allow an increase in the security deposits on rental properties to the equivalent of one month's rent, and that your Hon. Assembly review the remedies available to the landlords who are not given sufficient notice by social assistance tenants who vacate properties and whose rent in their new accommodation is paid by social assistance without regard for outstanding obligations in previous rental agreements.

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

I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petition are primarily from Manor, but they also are from Redvers, Weyburn, Glenavon, Vanguard, and others. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well in regard to presenting a petition for the save the Plains centre in Regina. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The petition is signed by people primarily from the community in and around Rouleau, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of names from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

These people are from Moose Jaw, from Regina, from Vanguard, from all over southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would rise again today as well to present a petition of names from dozens of people from throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed from people from Odessa, Edenwold, Balgonie, Kendal, Vibank — southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed the petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Holdfast, Redvers, Caron, and Moose Jaw.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the

Plains Health Centre.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina. They're from Weyburn. They're from Colgate, Saskatchewan. They're from Yellow Grass, brown grass, pink grass, blue grass, quack grass, from all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition regarding saving the Plains Health Centre, but not only from Saskatchewan residents but throughout western Canada, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, many of these are from Regina, Redvers, Balgonie, all throughout southern Saskatchewan. But I think what's important is the high standing that the Plains has throughout western Canada because . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. The hon. member knows that presenting petitions is not debatable and is limited to presenting the petition and describing where they're from.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of people from Martensville, Saskatoon, Biggar — no grass involved in any of these.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause your government to take action to allow an increase in security deposits on rental properties to the equivalent of one month's rent, and that your Hon. Assembly review the remedies available to landlords who are not given sufficient notice by social assistance tenants who vacate properties and whose rent in their new accommodation is paid by social assistance without regard for outstanding obligations in previous rental agreements.

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

Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) it is hereby read and received:

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the number of employees of the Government of Saskatchewan: (1) how many people are currently

employed by the Government of Saskatchewan; (2) how many of these employees are full time or part time; (3) how many of these employees are permanent, temporary, or casual; (4) how many of these employees are in scope and out of scope; (5) how many positions are currently vacant; (6) what is the average salary in each of the departments; and (7) what is the manager-to-staff ratio in each department?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly a group of nine individuals who are in your gallery who are currently residing at the cancer patient lodge located in my constituency of Regina Centre. And I appreciate that in the midst of your many serious personal and family concerns that you've taken time to come to the legislature and join us in the proceedings. So I ask that all members of the legislature join me in welcoming them here today and extending to each our best wishes.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we have in the east gallery the president of the landlords association of Saskatchewan, and with her other members of the association . . .

An Hon. Member: — Speaker's gallery.

Ms. Julé: — Speaker's gallery, pardon me. I would just like to welcome once again Ms. Moncrief and other members and ask the Assembly to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to my colleagues in the legislature, a two-person delegation from Zimbabwe. Mr. Simon Chikwavaire is the past president of Urban Councils in Zimbabwe, UCAZ, and currently a council member in the city of Harare, population 1.8 million, which is the capital of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Chikwavaire is joined by Mr. Walter Matikiti, the office manager of Urban Councils. They are guests of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and are taking part in an international partnership program, sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). Under the program, SUMA has been partnered with UCAZ. The purpose of the partnership is to strengthen local government organizations in both countries.

They are accompanied by Keith Schneider, executive director of SUMA, and will be staying in Saskatchewan for seven days to learn more about our system of local government and the operations of their partner, SUMA.

Our Zimbabwean friends visited the Department of Municipal

Government this morning and will be travelling later during their stay to Watrous and Strongfield to see a bit of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They will spend a day or two in Saskatoon as well.

We wish them well and note that last year three of their colleagues visited Saskatchewan in the middle of winter and attended SAMA's (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) 90th convention. So I would ask all of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to join with me in welcoming our Zimbabwean friends and Mr. Schneider to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame will hold its annual induction ceremony this spring and one of those who will be honoured is a friend of mine, Gord Kluzak. Besides being the grandson of a former member of this House, Art Kluzak, Gord was also a pretty fair hockey player. I might add for those of you that have watched *Happy Gilmore*, it's quite evident to Gord that I've proven superior on the golf course.

Mr. Speaker, Gord played all of his minor hockey in the Climax area before attending Notre Dame in Wilcox where he led the team to the Canadian midget championship.

At the age of 16, he joined the Billings Bighorns of the Western Hockey League. There he became the youngest player ever to be named to a WHL (Western Hockey League) all-star team. In 1982 Gord helped lead Canada to the world junior cup hockey championship. He was also named the tournament's best defenceman. Later in '82, the Boston Bruins selected Gord as the number one overall pick in the NHL (National Hockey League) draft. He went on to play eight seasons with Boston before chronic knee problems forced him to retire from hockey in 1990.

After his retirement, Gord was named winner of the Bill Masterton trophy for perseverance, dedication, and sportsmanship.

Gord has made his home in Boston where he hosts a fund-raising golf tournament each year, and also a volunteer speaker in the field of alcohol and drug awareness.

Mr. Speaker, I would like members of this House to join me in congratulating Gord Kluzak for his upcoming induction into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — M. le Président, je voudrais vous présentez plusieurs personnes qui sont dans le chambre adjourd'hui pour fêter la semaine nationale de la francophonie.

These people, Mr. Speaker, who as I said are here to celebrate National Francophone Week, represent a variety of associations.

Ils écoutent à la député de Regina-Sherwood ce matin dans le

rotunde, et nous nous rencontre à la institute dix-sept heure trente aujourd'hui pour continuer la celebration.

I will introduce the members. I am told they are here. Mme. Josée Lévesque, M. Bruno Sahut, association canadienne-française de Regina. But perhaps I could have the members stand, yes, as they are introduced.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Michel Vézina and Ronald Labrecque, de l'association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — M. Pierre l'Héritier, association des artistes de la Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mme. Suzanne Bugeaud Stradecki, l'association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — M. Robert Therrien, conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — M. Gilbert Hautcoeur, conseil général des écoles fransaskoises.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mme. Suzanne Leduc, conseil scolaire fransaskois de Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Albert Dubé, et Etienne Alary, coopérative des publications fransaskoises.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Finalement, Claude Shink, service fransaskois d'éducation des adultes.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And while I'm on my feet, I have also in attendance today, 25 students from Robert Usher School, who are here with their teacher, Todd Miller, to observe the proceedings and to generally gain whatever wisdom may be available from the Chamber today. So let's hope it's in plentiful supply for a change. I'd ask you to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also welcome in your gallery Bonnye and Brian Moncrief from the landlords association. They have many good ideas dealing with rental. In fact there's even the furniture and possibly the Premier may want to go ahead and talk to them about some furniture concerns that he has.

Also like to introduce to this House, Fred Heron from the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) sitting in the top left-hand corner. Welcome to our House today as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I with great pleasure introduce to you and through you to other members of the legislature, individuals seated in your gallery who are here today to witness second reading in just a short while of The Libraries Co-operation Act. I've asked our guests to stand as I mention their name and remain standing: Merrilee Rasmussen is the Chair of the Regina Public Library Board, and also chaired the Public Libraries Act Review Committee and the Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee.

Mr. George Bothwell, as many of you will know, is a long-standing supporter of the public library system. He is a member of the Regina Public Library Board and past president of both the Canadian Library Trustees' Association and the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association.

Mr. Ken Jensen also joins us today. He is the chief librarian at the Regina Public Library. Jeffrey Barber is the president of the Saskatchewan Library Association; Allan Johnson is the regional librarian for Southeast Regional Library, and these gentlemen have travelled from Weyburn to be with us here today. Marilyn Jenkins and Marie Sakon from the Provincial Library are also seated in your gallery.

And I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention a person who has spent countless hours working on the development of the multitype concept, the Provincial Librarian, Maureen Woods.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming our guests here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would also like to welcome the general secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Fred Herron. Fred, I look forward to the meetings with you in the coming days. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Now with the permission of the members, the Speaker would like to introduce two very special guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery today.

Visiting here in Saskatchewan from their home community of Beiseker, Alberta, is a couple who have retired some time ago

from the hardware store that is listed in the phone book by the name of Hagel's Hardware, where your Speaker learned the first rule of democracy — that basically, before you start anything else, the customer is always right.

The people in my gallery that I'd like to introduce to you are my parents, Joe and Doreen Hagel. And I'd welcome all members to join me in expressing a warm Saskatchewan welcome to them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — Mr. Speaker, they don't look old enough.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The Speaker would like to assure all members of the Assembly that his parents are older than him.

And while acknowledging that members generally treat the Speaker very kindly, you may want to treat the Speaker especially kindly today.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Francophone Week in Saskatchewan

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce to you and to members of the Legislative Assembly, and to the people of Saskatchewan, that the Premier has officially designated March 20 to March 26 as National Francophone Week in Saskatchewan.

M. le Président, la Semaine nationale de la francophonie fut célébrée pour la première fois en 1993. L'Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française est à l'origine de cette célébration. Cette association est une organisation nationale qui promeut l'usage de la langue française en éducation et dans les activités journalières. Cette semaine a pour but de donner aux Francophones de tout le pays un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté nationale et à les rendre fiers de leur langue. Il s'agit aussi d'un projet éducatif public conçu pour appuyer les initiatives éducatives des communautés francophones.

(Translation: National Francophone Week was first celebrated in 1993. It was begun by the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française, a national organization dedicated to promoting the use of the French language in education and day-to-day activities. The purpose of this week is to give Francophones across the country a sense of belonging to a national community and renewed pride in their language. It is also a public education project designed to support francophone communities' educational initiatives.)

Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the privilege of officially launching Francophone Week on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan during a ceremony here in the rotunda.

M. le Président, pendant cette semaine, partout dans la province, les Fransaskois célébreront leur fier héritage et leurs nombreux exploits accomplis tout au long de l'histoire de la

province.

Le thème de cette année, qui est l'identité culturelle francophonie, nous rappelle leur détermination de préserver leur langue et leur culture qu'on retrouve dans les communautés de la province.

(Translation: During this week, Fransaskois from all over the province will celebrate their proud heritage and their many achievements throughout the history of our province.

This year's theme, Francophone Communities and Cultural Identity, reminds us of the determination to maintain their language and culture shown by communities around the province.)

Mr. Speaker, this determination has made the Fransaskois community important contributors to our province's heritage. We look forward to the continued strength of the Fransaskois community and a strong Francophone presence in a united Canada.

Merci, M. Président.

(Translation: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would too like to recognize National Francophone Week.

La semaine nationale de la francophonie nous donne l'occasion de souligner l'importance de la langue et de la culture française dans notre province.

Les fransaskois contribuent beaucoup à la promotion du français au notre province, et à la promotion de Saskatchewan aux autres francophones du Canada.

Aujourd'hui, nous reconnaissons tous les services, les organisations et les personnes ici à Saskatchewan pour leurs contributions importantes de notre culture.

Mr. Speaker, National Francophone Week is an appropriate time to underline the importance of the French language and culture in our province. Fransaskois people contribute greatly to the promotion of French in our province and in promoting Saskatchewan to francophones throughout Canada.

Today we recognize all of the services, organizations, and people here in Saskatchewan for their important contribution to our provincial culture. Merci bien.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sister Eliza of Mary

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, this is Education Week. Today begins the Francophone Week in Saskatchewan. In Prince Albert, in my constituency, and throughout the province we can pay special attention to both weeks by rejoicing in the life of

Sister Eliza of Mary, Alice Gervais, a life of 98 years devoted to Christian education, culture and bilingualism.

Sister Eliza was born in Quebec in 1897 and came with her parents to Duck Lake in 1905, the year Saskatchewan became a province. She taught for nearly 50 years at bilingual centres in Marcelin, Duck Lake, Bellevue, Debden, and Prince Albert.

After she retired from teaching, she worked for another 20 years — a librarian, a receptionist at the Provincial House in Prince Albert. She received the Governor General's Medal in 1973 and a Centennial Medal in 1967.

Mr. Speaker, Sister Eliza was a pioneer in bringing education, bilingual understanding, to culture enrichment in our province. Hers is a life truly worth celebrating.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Joseph's School Grand Opening

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not every day, let alone every month, that a new high school is opened in our province of Saskatchewan but that's exactly what happened last night in Saskatoon in the communities of Sutherland and Forest Grove and Erindale at a wonderful celebration of community where students and parents and staff gathered together for the official opening of St. Joseph's high school in Saskatoon.

As we celebrate Education Week in Saskatchewan, this school is a facility to be proud of. It's beautiful, it's modern as you might expect, and it's also a unique architectural design that was done here in Saskatchewan. The design creates a kind of mall-type architecture for students with a large open space characteristic of many malls, commercial malls, where students can congregate, and it really makes a departure from the conventional maze or warren of hallways that you find in many high schools.

St. Joseph's is also unique in that it's very future oriented in terms of having computer pods spread strategically throughout the school in various locations so that students can use these pods on assignments and to connect with the Internet. It's a wonderful facility, a place where young people in our province can grow physically, intellectually, and spiritually. And I extend congratulations to St. Joseph's.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Education Week Tribute to NORTEP and SIFC

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, as part of Education Week I want to take time to pay special tribute to 20 years of invaluable service by two unique Saskatchewan educational institutions, the NORTEP (northern teacher education program) and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

In March 1976 I was hired as a program developer by northern school board to start up a teacher education program in northern

Saskatchewan. In the fall of 1976 I taught the first accredited class to begin the NORTEP teacher education program. And I was especially proud, Mr. Speaker, because it was the first educational partnership between the province and the university under northern Saskatchewan people's control.

The elected northern school board became the first governing authority of the program. It is now governed by a special NORTEP council which includes a tribal council representation and Creighton, Ile-a-la-Crosse boards. In its 20 years, Mr. Speaker, NORTEP has graduated 192 students, 155 of which are working in education related fields and 133 are teaching.

I am proud to be associated with this unique Saskatchewan program and I honour all those past and present staff as well as the university personnel, the cooperating teachers, the board members, and especially all the students.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very pleased to announce that the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in its 20 years is the only Indian run and controlled college of its type in Canada. It also adds . . . in addition to its Regina campus it has its P.A. (Prince Albert) campus. Mr. Speaker, SIFC's (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) educational impact, its cultural impact, its legal and linguistic and spiritual life is widely recognized. I ask all members to join me to celebrate 20 years of service on these two valuable institutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rural Service Branches

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to raise concerns of the residents of Morse. Mr. Speaker, recently we heard that the chartered banks are once again on pace for another year of billion-dollar-plus profits. Some bank earnings are already 12 per cent ahead of those last year.

Despite whopping profits many banks are removing branches out of rural Saskatchewan. Morse is one of the many communities that's been recently affected. While the banks still tried to serve the public with scheduled days in certain communities, the face-to-face service has been replaced by the debit card and automated teller machine.

Mr. Speaker, rural communities like Morse often have seniors who chose to stay in the community for their retirement. They're not always comfortable with this impersonal service. Other people are concerned that lending decisions will be made without a thorough knowledge of the community.

The bank branch closure and announced closure of rural SaskPower offices and Crop Insurance offices in other areas is generating fear. Last December Canada Post announced a mandate review. Members of the local community are now concerned that this review may threaten their post office.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I congratulate the people of Morse for working hard to keep the services that they do have and I sincerely hope that both government and business will make sure rural people, jobs, and service are a higher priority than

simply making the bottom line. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Newspaper Awards

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, today is the first day of spring, signalling the end of winter and, evidence to the contrary, what we hope is the start of warmer weather.

This time of year also marks the publication of the nominations for the national newspaper awards. Of course *The Globe and Mail* has been nominated for awards, along with *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, and also some reputable small-city newspapers. But nowhere did I see mention of the Regina *Leader-Post* and Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*.

Mr. Speaker, not even one little nomination. I almost feel sorry for Murray Mandryk and Dale Eisler. Surely their fair, balanced, accurate, and accountable reporting should have netted them something. To accommodate them perhaps the organization that determines the categories could come up with something they could be eligible for — perhaps an award to the company which slashes the most staff at one moment; maybe an award for most innovative way of giving their employees the pink slip; perhaps an award for a catchy phrase — something like, if it happened in Saskatchewan, it's news to us.

There's still time to create a new category as these awards will be handed out on May 3 in Toronto. Spring is here, Mr. Speaker. Isn't it wonderful? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Administration

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when this government began restructuring our health care system, they also introduced a district support branch. This branch is made up of an executive director, administrative coordinator, five district directors, five administrative assistants, and 17 district consultants.

Will the Minister of Health explain why his government is funding yet another level of bureaucracy in the Health department when each district already has a CEO (chief executive officer) and the department already has a program branch?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell the House and tell the member, Mr. Speaker, that the process of health reform has meant the creation of district health boards which are accountable to the people within the districts. The establishment of those boards has meant that the number of people in administrative functions has actually decreased, not increased, which is quite a good improvement to our health care system, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell the member also that we are in the process of reorganizing the Department of Health to take into account the fact that we have devolved a lot of people to the local level and the district boards. And we are right-sizing the department. But at the same time, we are going to retain sufficient personnel to work with the districts to make sure that people get the health care services they need at the appropriate place, in the appropriate time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the minister should tell us then why in fact all the newspaper ads are for directors instead of nurses.

Mr. Speaker, it may interest the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to know that the total salaries for these positions that I referred to, according to your own spending records, totalled more than \$1.2 million. It may also interest the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to know that these same people received an average wage increase of 9 per cent over a one-year period, to bring their average annual salary to more than \$55,000. And this doesn't include what raises they've had in this given year.

Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to roll back these shameful wage increases and assure the people of Saskatchewan that this government's friends and consultant cronies will stop getting wealthy off of wellness?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to tell the member, Mr. Speaker, that this government hires people for the professional civil service that does good work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan through an independent, non-partisan, Public Service Commission. I want to tell the member that.

I also want to tell the member, Mr. Speaker, that the terms and conditions of employment for people that work within the Department of Health are commensurate with the terms and conditions of employment for civil servants in other branches of government and across the country. But if they are in scope, they are arrived at through the process of free collective bargaining. There's an independent, non-partisan Public Service Commission that does the hiring, not the politicians — not like the Liberals do it, not like the Conservatives do it. There's a free collective bargaining process. That determines how the people are paid in the Department of Health, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the minister fails to realize is that you've added an entire level of bureaucracy.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more shocking than hearing about the average salary increase is to actually hear what was some of the specific raises total. And I would like to read a few into the record right now.

We have some in the Northwest district. Here's one, consultant, getting a cheque of 63,500 a year; her raise was \$17,500 in one

year. Here's one in the Southeast, 83,000; one in the Southwest, a \$10,146 raise bringing that to 69,000. Here's one in Regina, 67,000.

The list goes on and on and I would like to send across some of these lists for the other members, perhaps the cabinet members, to have a look at, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is shameful and disgraceful at a time when everyone else is enduring cut-backs, job losses, and less service.

Will the minister do what the people want by abolishing the district support branch and rehiring medical professionals to treat our sick and elderly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to tell the member, Mr. Speaker, that since health reform and since the abolition of a lot of separate boards and the creation of districts, the number of people in administrative positions delivering health care in the province of Saskatchewan has been decreased by a figure between 15 and 20 per cent.

The number of people who have been laid off, many of whom have been recalled, that deliver front-line services to the people of the province, has been cut by less than 5 per cent. In other words, the number of people in management and administration has been cut at a rate of three times that of people who deliver services to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. This government is the most efficient government in Canada in terms of the number of people we employ to deliver the services that our people need, Mr. Speaker — a far cry from what's going on in Ottawa; a far cry from what the Conservatives do in office. I thank the member for the question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Well, thank you. That's most interesting, that answer. But perhaps the minister would enjoy to come out to rural Saskatchewan — Climax, Coronach, Mankota — and debate me in a public hall and see if you can get away with statements like that. You haven't laid off nurses and you've . . . oh, come on.

Mr. Speaker, hospitals are closing, nurses and other health care professionals are being fired, and our health care system is a shadow of what it used to be before the choices of the NDP (New Democratic Party) government. All the while this government continues to cry "poor" and points fingers at everyone else. Yet it was their choice and theirs alone to add another expensive level of bureaucracy to our health system, one which paid consultants and others at least \$1.2 million in one year and only the minister knows how much they've received in this given year.

Will the minister explain how he and his government can justify the spending of these tax dollars at the same time he's closing down hospitals, firing nurses, and taking away health care in rural communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've tried to answer the member's questions. All I can say is I'm glad that he's managed to take some time out from contemplating his race for the Liberal leadership. I'm glad that he's taken time out from contemplating his ultimate Senate appointment for joining the Liberal Party. I thank the member for the questions. We're going to continue to build the best health care system in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the sick and the elderly will find those comments real funny.

Mr. Speaker, people across this province are not receiving the level of health care they need or deserve because of the cost-cutting measures of your government. People across Saskatchewan are looking to this government to cut waste before cutting more services in health.

Will the minister commit in this House today to eliminating waste in his own department such as that which is contained in the district support branch before firing another nurse or closing another hospital? Can you not give them that assurance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well if the member wants to talk about cuts, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in this province we have not cut health care spending since 1991, we've increased it. Which is a far cry from what the Liberals are doing in Ottawa because they have cut health care spending this year by \$57 million to our province, and by 1998 they're going to cut their spending on health care by 35 per cent. So I say, why does the member get up and tell us that we shouldn't cut health care or that we should put more money into health care. Why doesn't he address those concerns to the Liberal Party which is in power in Ottawa and is the party that's implementing these cuts that that member's complaining about, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Service Districts Act

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm glad the Liberal member is concerned about pay hikes. We're looking forward to his signed letter saying he'll pay back his \$4,400 one.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Government. After a lot of consultation and probably not that much listening, we do have your master plan for municipalities. It shows that there's another level of government and another level of bureaucracy. This one has the power to impose taxes.

Madam Minister, we like the idea of municipalities cooperating with one another. In fact it's throughout Saskatchewan this is already happening at present. Municipalities are cooperating in the areas of fire, administration, recreation, and all sorts of

things basically as long as the list that you have in your legislation.

Madam Minister, why is it necessary to create another level of government to provide shared services when municipalities are already doing this on their own?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite would know, having been a mayor and in local government himself, that there is a great deal of inter-municipal cooperation on many fronts. There are many municipalities who do cooperate. There are others, however, who have yet to make that move, who are not involved with their neighbouring communities in collaborating to provide services. We get requests from people who have never had that experience, who think it's very difficult, who think they have to retain lawyers and that sort of thing.

And so this is an effort simply to simplify the process. It is entirely voluntary. It does not lead to a second layer of government. Municipal governments out there, Mr. Speaker, know; they know what's best for them. They know what the needs of their communities are. They're elected to serve those needs and they do it diligently.

This Act is voluntary. If people at the local level feel that it will not assist them, they will not use it. If they feel it will assist them, it's there for them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regardless of the rhetoric, there is another level of government, a level of government that also has the power to tax. That is the additional power that's given. They also have an additional power to borrow money, of going into debt — something which municipalities were prohibited from doing and they lived within that very well. It looks like you're cutting funding to municipalities and replacing it with a credit card.

Madam Minister, why is that provision there when it hasn't been there in the past and wasn't needed? Isn't this just another way for you to download your responsibilities by downloading debt onto the municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I would commend the member opposite for his fertile imagination. I think that you can read whatever you want into the Act; you can talk about another level of the government.

What is contemplated is when municipalities want to take collective action — just as an example, let's say a waste management project — they might appoint one member from each respective council to be that council's representative for the purposes of this project. They may agree, if funds needed to be raised, to requisition their respective municipalities to cover the costs. They may need to engage someone to work on this

specific project. That would be the hiring authorities. They may need to rent a building to do recycling in. That would be the authority to enter into leases. It's that simple. It's that simple, Mr. Speaker. We're making it easier for them to cooperate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Democratic Party Fund-raiser

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier was telling us how, even with a \$4,400 pay increase, some of the NDP MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are having a tough time making ends meet. One of the members had to take a second job as a school teacher.

And now even the Government House Leader is earning a second income. He is selling perogies out of his cabinet office. We recently received this flyer in the mail, advertising a big perogy and antipasto sale for the Regina Northeast NDP Association. Contact the minister's office for more information is what the flyer says.

My question to the minister is: how many perogies have you sold; how much money have you raised; and do you think this is an appropriate use of your cabinet office and staff, selling perogies for the NDP?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, the ladies of Regina Northeast have in fact sold several hundred dozen perogies. I'm told by those who've got them they are the best in town, and I make the offer available. So far as I know, they're being sold out of our house, out of my residence.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the minister would care to read the bottom of it, it says contact Dolores, and it's his cabinet office phone number. So, Mr. Premier, clearly some of your ministers don't have enough to do. I think the perogy king from Regina Northeast would fall into this category.

Mr. Premier, you recently promised to cut the size of your cabinet. Will you live up to that commitment today and get rid of the minister from Regina Northeast, so he can dedicate more time to building his perogy empire?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It may have been that someone may have preferred to leave off an offer in the office here. That's possible.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, this strikes me as the pettiest of muckraking when the time of this Assembly is taken up with the question of whether or not people may have preferred to leave offers to these excellent perogies. I really have to recommend them to the members opposite. I really think, Mr. Speaker, this is the pettiest of muckraking. But they are the best of perogies, I assure the member opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Providence Place Geriatric Unit

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, volunteers from the Moose Jaw district worked very hard to build a geriatric assessment and rehabilitation unit at Providence Place. Mr. Speaker, this facility was designed to help seniors support themselves.

The NDP government approved design plans for the facility in 1993, guaranteeing in writing that they would fund this unit over and above the normal needs-based funding available to districts. However last fall this government reneged on this promise, and they now insist that the district must fund the program itself. Will the Minister of Health tell the volunteers who worked so hard to raise money for this facility why he and his government is breaking this promise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, we're not breaking any promise we made to the people of Moose Jaw. This is a matter which is within the jurisdiction of the district health board and the department is working with the district health board with respect to the issue and will continue to do so. And the district health board, as a local board with elected people and appointed people, will make the appropriate decision to meet the health care needs of the people in Moose Jaw, including those needs that have been met through Providence Place. Those needs will continue to be met as they have been before.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, there appears to be one standard for the average person in this province and quite another one for this government. On one hand, the Health minister says there's simply not enough funding in health care. On the other hand, a contract dated last November 18 indicates three consultants were paid as much as \$950 a day to study Providence Place.

The total bill, including expenses, may total more than \$16,000. Mr. Speaker, given the fact that so many front-line care-givers have been eliminated because of that government, will the minister explain how he can justify paying consultants so much money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I think implicit in the question, Mr. Speaker, was, I think, the assertion that the district health board was paying the consultants the money. Then the member says, how do I justify paying the consultants the money?

Well if I'm not paying the consultants the money, obviously it isn't my place to justify paying the money because that is a decision of the local district health board. That's what the member can't understand.

But I want to say to the member that in the last House what his party said was, don't rush into health reform, don't make any decisions about health reform. You have to take your time, you

have to do appropriate consultation, you have to do appropriate planning. Study, study, study. So the Moose Jaw District Health Board goes and does a study with respect to their needs, and the member complains.

And I say that the member is being unfair to the local district health board. I say that they have every right to contract the aid of consultants, if they deem it appropriate, to decide on an appropriate configuration of services in their district. That's what they did. It wasn't the decision of the Department of Health. I don't know what the member's problem is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: —Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Department of Health had a lot to do with suggesting to bring in consultants from British Columbia rather than to consult the grass roots level in Thunder Creek.

But, Mr. Speaker, as if a consulting price tag of \$16,000 wasn't shameful enough, another contract dated last November 21 indicated that a second group of consultants studied Providence Place. This pair was paid as much as \$1,000 per day plus air fare, hotels, meals, and car rental for a total figure of \$11,300.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Wood River noted only minutes ago the number of consultants in the Health department's district support branch and the hefty raises those people have received. Will the minister explain to the people of Moose Jaw why he's wasting even more money on more consultants instead of directing these funds to patient care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well what perplexes me here, Mr. Speaker, is that the consulting services were requested by people who live in Moose Jaw, who live in the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District which that member attempts to represent. And both the health district and Providence Place requested that consultants be retained. Consultants have been retained. They'll be paid by the district. These are decisions that were made locally. Now the member comes here and asks me why decisions that were made in his community were made in his community.

That is not only inappropriate with respect to me but it's inappropriate with respect to the people that live in the community that that member tries to represent, Mr. Speaker. Because that is a decision that has been made by the people in his community that are mandated to make that decision. If the member believes that those people don't have the right to make those decisions then let the member say so and let the member advise the people in his community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, what the minister fails to recognize time and time again, he controls the purse-strings therefore he controls the local board people and they bully them into making the decisions that they need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House yet another contract for consulting services regarding Providence Place. In this case, two Vancouver consultants were paid as much as \$950 per day plus expenses.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the people across this province why there seems to be a shortage of money for health care but the government vault appears to be wide open for expensive consultants to study a project already studied on two previous occasions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'll tell the member why there's a shortage of money, Mr. Speaker, and it has nothing to do with this government. There's a shortage of money because the Liberals are taking \$57 million out of health care this year and \$100 million next year. That's why there's a shortage of money.

And the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District has written a letter to Paul Martin, Mr. Speaker, — which I have a copy of, which the member should have a copy of, and which the Minister of Finance has a copy of — in which the people from the member's . . . from the community which the member tries to represent make the point that what the federal Liberals are doing with the support of that member is undermining the ability of every province in Canada, not just Saskatchewan, to deliver health care.

So if the member wants to know where the problem is, the problem is in the Liberal Party. That's where the problem is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the letter that's referred to is no doubt one that was written with a lot of economic blackmail insinuated. But, Mr. Speaker, the terms of reference for one of these consulting contracts states, and I quote:

The district must be prepared to financially support the geriatric unit's programs which are serving district residents.

I have another letter signed by the deputy Health minister before volunteers went out to raise money, which stated, and I quote:

I can guarantee that the department will fund the district for geriatric assessment.

This letter went on to promise funding which is apart from the regular needs-based funding.

Mr. Speaker, the department promises one thing, breaks its word, and then wastes taxpayers' money hiring consultants to figure out how to get out of this messy situation. Will the minister explain how he can justify wasting valuable health dollars to solve his political problems?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member talks about breaking promises. I want to refer the member to the red book that the Liberals ran on in the last federal election.

And if the member wants to do a study on broken promises, the member should look at the promises made by the Liberals in the last election. And the member should look at the record of the Liberal Party in office. Liberals say one thing in opposition, something else in government.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, whereas we haven't cut health care spending in Saskatchewan by one dime, the Liberals are cutting health care spending.

And not only that, in the last election the Liberals said that they were going to cut government spending, and if they cut government spending they would be cutting it in health care and education, Mr. Speaker, and that approach was rejected by the people of the province in the election.

And that member has got to decide whether he is a representative of the people of Saskatchewan in his constituency or whether he is an apologist for the Liberals in Ottawa who are cutting back on health care, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid again that the minister fails to recognize that it's his department that's holding the purse-strings on these people, he's the one. Whether he is spending the same amount of money, he is not spending it appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the various consulting contracts, it appears that the job of one of the consultants referred to earlier by my colleague from Wood River was to pay the other consultants. The individual in question, by the way, was making \$83,000.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why this government expanded the number of consultants so they can hire and pay for even more consultants?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that what this government has done in the last few years is to replace 410 boards, each with its own administration and own management, with 30 district boards which overall have a much smaller administrative structure and much smaller management.

And we know and the people of Saskatchewan know that if we are going to maintain our publicly funded medicare system, without any assistance from the Liberals, we are going to have to spend our money very smartly and very efficiently. That's what we're doing. That's what we will continue to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 36 — An Act to amend or repeal Miscellaneous Statutes concerning Municipal Government

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend or repeal Miscellaneous Statutes concerning Municipal Government be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 37 — An Act to amend The Water Corporation Act

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Water Corporation Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Power Corporation Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 39 — An Act to Promote, Develop and Sustain Irrigation

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to Promote, Develop and Sustain Irrigation be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 40 - An Act respecting Pharmacists and Pharmacies

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill respecting Pharmacists and Pharmacies be now introduced and read a first time.

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

(1430)

Bill No. 41 — An Act to amend The Mental Health Services Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Mental Health Services Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Written Question

The Speaker: — Before calling written questions, I draw to the attention of the Assembly that the fourth part of question 15 standing on today's order paper is out of order on account that it seeks information pertaining to more than one year.

Members are again reminded of the long-standing practice of this Assembly that a written question may not ask for information related to more than a one-year period. Accordingly the government is not required to provide an answer to this part. The first three parts to question 15 are in order and may be answered by the government. The content of the fourth part of question 15 could be resubmitted as a notice of motion for return or rewritten as two separate questions.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I will, Mr. Speaker, table the answer to question no. 16 in keeping with our policy of being open and accessible.

The Speaker: — Question 16 — the answer is provided.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 12 — An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act and to enact consequential amendments

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 1996.

The amendments I am proposing are aimed directly at those individuals who actively try to avoid making maintenance payments. These amendments strengthen the ability of the maintenance enforcement office to ensure that people comply with their court orders and agreements to pay child maintenance.

Since the office was opened 10 years ago this month, the default rate for maintenance payments has fallen from approximately 85 per cent to 25 per cent. This means that the majority of parents who have the financial capacity to pay are paying maintenance as ordered or agreed.

These amendments provide the director of maintenance enforcement with new tools to use, particularly with respect to people who are deliberately organizing their financial affairs to avoid paying maintenance.

The first major change proposed in this Bill is to allow the director of maintenance enforcement to direct SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) to suspend the driver's

licence of a person who is in default of his or her maintenance payments.

This is a serious remedy which will be used only as a last resort. The Act sets out detailed limitations on the use of the remedy. The defaulter must be at least three months in arrears. The defaulter will receive at least two notices of the director's intention to use this remedy. And the director must have used all other reasonable steps to try to enforce the maintenance order. This new remedy has been introduced in Alberta, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and the Yukon with positive results.

The second major change will allow the director to access deferred pension funds in limited cases. This remedy will be available only where the defaulter is currently neither paying money into nor receiving payments out of the pension fund.

In both of those situations, the defaulter has a current source of income that can be attacked by the director.

The amendment was drafted in this narrow manner to achieve the fairest balance between protecting pension funds for the defaulter's future and ensuring that the defaulter's children have the support they need today. This remedy is again seen as a last resort. It will be available only where the defaulter is at least three months in arrears, the director has used all other reasonable steps to enforce the maintenance order, and the defaulter has received prior notice of the director's intention to use this remedy.

Mr. Speaker, a number of minor changes are also made in this Bill. The 10-year limitation period for the enforcement of arrears will be eliminated. Instead, the appropriate length of time over which arrears can be enforced will be determined by the court. This makes our legislation consistent with that in British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba. This will improve the operation of the Act in situations where interprovincial cooperation is a factor.

This Bill confirms the discretion of the director to determine the appropriate enforcement mechanisms in each case and the ability of the director to make arrangements with the defaulter that realistically can be met. The director is also given the discretion to decline to enforce orders that do not clearly specify the amount to be paid. In those cases, the parties are also given the option of returning to the court to have the order clarified.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan maintenance enforcement program is one of the most effective in Canada for ensuring parents and children obtain the support to which they are entitled. Since the office opened its doors on March 1, 1986 it has received more than 19,000 applications for enforcement, collected more than \$122 million on behalf of Saskatchewan families, and reduced the default rate on child support payments from 85 per cent to 25 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Even with this high degree of success, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to improve and refine the

current program. The amendments before us today will ensure that the necessary tools are available to the office to continue its effective and efficient service for the children of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intent of the Bill — I appreciate your comments, Mr. Justice Minister — but the intent of the Bill and the desired outcome, I think we would agree with. However there are some problems I think with the Bill that we're getting a few calls coming in. And we're going to ask for a little more time to have a little bit better look at the Bill. So at this time I'd like to adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned

Bill No. 28 — An Act to provide for the Establishment, Development and Maintenance of Public Libraries

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 28, The Public Libraries Act, 1996 lays out the framework for a public library system to carry us into the new century. This Bill is the result of broad consultations conducted by a ministerial advisory committee appointed to review the Act and provide recommendations for changes to the Act and regulations.

Library board Chairs and directors and other members of the library community told us a review of The Public Libraries Act was needed, and we listened, Mr. Speaker.

The four-person minister's advisory committee included representatives from the North, regional libraries and urban libraries, and government. The advisory committee invited our 10 public library systems, SUMA, SARM, (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) the Saskatchewan Library Trustees' Association, the Saskatchewan Library Association, unions, and groups representing educational interests to provide their concerns, thoughts, and recommendations regarding the Act and regulations.

My personal thanks to the members of the advisory committee for their many hours of deliberations and for their thoughtful recommendations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the advisory committee heard that regional libraries believed a lack of boundaries had the potential to destabilize the regional library system. Regional libraries and municipalities said a process was needed in the event there was a need for a municipality to move from one region to another, a process which would allow input from affected parties respecting any decision to revise boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the 10 library systems unanimously requested that the legislation reflect the need for a whole-province or one-province library system. The committee also heard that municipalities should be required to participate in regional

library systems. Withdrawal of municipalities affects the ability of regional libraries to provide the best possible services to rural clients.

The Pakkisonon Nuye-ah Library System Board asked for consistency between the North and the South in the provisions for the Northern Library System Board and the northern community public library boards. They also recommended more local control and requested that the grant process in the regulations provide greater recognition for local contributions.

Consultations revealed a wide diversity of views on regional library funding. The advisory committee recommended to me that a full review of regional library services and funding commence as soon as possible. I have asked the Provincial Librarian to make this project a priority for 1996-97 year.

Mr. Speaker, The Public Libraries Act, 1996 responds to what we heard from the public library systems — the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The Bill reflects this belief and establishes a structure for the provincial public library system.

This Bill sets out the purpose of a provincial public library system — to ensure equitable access to basic library services by all residents of Saskatchewan. It recognizes that the components of the provincial library system include a database of the records of public, academic, special, and school libraries; an inter-library loan system; the ability to use your local public library card at any other public library in the province; and autonomous library boards.

The Act requires that municipalities participate in regional library systems. Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of municipalities participate in regional libraries. This figure has remained constant since 1982. Full participation is necessary if all citizens are to enjoy access to library services.

Mr. Speaker, The Public Libraries Act, 1996 provides a dispute resolution process in several areas. It provides a dispute resolution process in the matter of boundaries, and building on the foundation of the existing Act, provides a dispute resolution process to assist in the resolution of any disputes within the provincial public library system.

The Act provides for the establishment of boundaries for library systems and outlines a process for municipalities to move from one library system to another. Combining library facilities is a local decision, Mr. Speaker. The creation of joint-venture libraries will require a written agreement between the partners. Written agreements are a tool for identifying and addressing potential problems before they become a crisis.

This Bill lays a foundation for the future province-wide, organizational and electronic networks and strengthens the provincial public library system to ensure that all our citizens have access to library services.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill, Bill No. 28, The Public Libraries Act, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the library boundaries are set out in regulations, but if boundaries are to be changed, there will be a meeting among the affected parties to discuss proposed changes. If there is no agreement, it will go to arbitration. That I feel is a good thing.

The new Act is supposed to address some of the changes that information services have made over the past years. Now most larger libraries are hooked into the information highway and frankly it is easier to share resources. Articles can be faxed via . . . sent via computer and books can be scanned and sent electronically.

In April of '95 the federal and provincial governments announced they are spending one and a half million dollars in an infrastructure agreement, and that the provincial government provided \$570,000 while Ottawa provided \$249,000. About 300 communities are taking part in this program.

I also think, most importantly . . . and I'm pleased to see that this Bill maintains that all residents in Saskatchewan will be able to get printed material from libraries in their areas free. And I think the key here is accessibility to all.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I feel that most of my questions or concerns can be answered in committee and will not hold this Bill up.

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

(1445)

Bill No. 29 — An Act to enable Co-operation among all Types of Autonomous Libraries for the Provision of Library Services

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 29, The Libraries Co-operation Act, 1996, will lay the groundwork for developing a multitype library system in Saskatchewan. The multitype library system will establish a network of autonomous libraries and information providers, including universities, schools, public and special libraries, to share services and resources.

Mr. Speaker, The Libraries Co-operation Act will establish a multitype library board to bring together decision makers, including trustees, administrators, and senior staff from the four library sectors. The Libraries Co-operation Act, 1996, will also define how libraries from each sector may voluntarily enter into multitype agreements. Formal agreements will be required to allow libraries from each sector to share their resources across jurisdictional boundaries.

Further, Mr. Speaker, The Libraries Co-operation Act will define the role of the Saskatchewan Provincial Library in ensuring the development of the multitype library system. No other agency has a mandate to encourage greater cooperation and resource sharing among libraries. The staff and resources provided by the Government of Saskatchewan will help ensure the establishment of this system.

Mr. Speaker, The Libraries Co-operation Act is being brought forward by my government at the recommendation of the Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee. Extensive work was done by the library community to develop a vision for a province-wide multitype library system which would extend the principles of cooperation which already exist.

In 1994, in response to a recommendation from the library community, the Multitype Library Advisory Committee was appointed. This government, Mr. Speaker, was pleased to respond to the library community on such a positive initiative.

The Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee was asked to develop a detailed strategic plan for the implementation of a multitype library system for the province of Saskatchewan. The committee included representation from each library sector: public libraries, school libraries, special libraries, and post-secondary libraries; and other decision makers, including library trustees, school trustees, SUMA, SARM, and the provincial government.

The committee consulted widely with the library community in Saskatchewan. Representatives of the Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee have kept in close communication with their constituents throughout the process of developing the strategic plan. As a result of this commitment to consultation, there is widespread support for the multitype library system initiative within the library community in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, other jurisdictions across Canada are watching Saskatchewan in its development of the model for a multitype library system. All across North America, libraries are recognizing that greater cooperation brings great benefits. Taxpayers are better served by ensuring maximum use of local library resources across all sectors within communities. Library users, especially those in rural areas, will benefit from faster access to information and increased access to the most accurate, up-to-date resources.

The multitype library system will affect all geographical areas of the province. However, Mr. Speaker, it will be particularly beneficial to rural and remote areas because of the potential to access resources from the library closest to the user.

Promoting cooperation, partnerships, and sharing of resources to maximize resource utilization and minimize duplication are key directions for my government, Mr. Speaker. I am confident that release of the committee's final report, *Think Globally, Search Locally: A Strategic Plan for the Implementation of a Multitype Library System in Saskatchewan*, and passage of The Libraries Co-operation Act will lead to immediate and specific action to begin developing the multitype library system for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill, Bill No. 29, The Libraries Co-operation Act, 1996. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this

Act is part of the recommendations provided by the Multitype Library Development Advisory Committee in April of '94. And the municipalities I have contacted are also in agreement with this Bill.

Basically we will support this Bill because the new Multitype Library Board should help to make services more accessible to clients. A couple of questions I believe I do have concerning this Bill is how much money the new Multitype Library Board will cost, but I feel we can get these answers in committees.

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

Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Hotel Keepers Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to move second reading of The Hotel Keepers Amendment Act, 1996. The sole purpose of this Bill is to increase the applicable fine level for offenders under the Act from \$25 to \$250.

The provincial offences under the Act to which this increase would apply are the following: a guest who continues to create a disturbance after having been requested to stop by the hotel keeper; a guest who, having made such a disturbance, fails to leave the hotel premises forthwith after being requested to do so by the hotel keeper; or a hotel keeper who either fails to request a disturber to stop, or having made such a request, fails to require the disturber to leave where the disturber persists in the disturbance.

Mr. Speaker, the fine levels for these offences have not been amended since 1965. The hotel keepers association has requested these amendments to ensure that the applicable fines will have their desired deterrent effect. It is worth noting that, to their credit, the hotel keepers association have indicated their support for an increased fine level both for the disturber and for the hotel keeper who fails to perform his or her duties with respect to a disturber.

Mr. Speaker, I would also note that the previous reference to default imprisonment for failing to pay a fine is no longer required in The Hotel Keepers Act. This is because The Summary Offences Procedure Act now addresses the issue of default imprisonment for all general provincial offences.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Hotel Keepers Act.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's commendable to see that statutes that have been in place for years and years and years . . . and the mothballs are being cleaned up and attended to.

And one reference that's made to this particular change, which again is very important, is the fact that it deals with responsibility and deterrence — responsibility on the part of the keeper of a hotel to ensure that customers of that hotel are well looked after and get the services that they should be provided with. The other is for perpetrators of offences, if you wish, within the confines of that facility to be dealt with adequately.

And perhaps there might be a lesson here in other aspects and concerns dealing with such things as the landlords and tenants Act which might also fall into line with something similar to what is being addressed in The Hotel Keepers Act.

With that, Mr. Speaker, it is not our intention to longer hold back this Bill, and refer it to the committee for review there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 33 — An Act respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to introduce The Service Districts Act to this House.

This important initiative will provide a new legislative framework for voluntary cooperation among municipalities to deliver services to their residents. This new Act is enabling legislation. It offers a new tool for municipalities to achieve economies of scale in service delivery where they are possible and to pursue opportunities to meet the service needs of residents that may otherwise be beyond their capacity as individual municipalities.

Current Saskatchewan municipal Acts include authority for municipalities to enter into agreements with a list of various parties to provide services jointly. In fact in its first term, this government expanded the list to encourage more inter-municipal cooperation. Under such agreements, municipalities may establish inter-municipal boards or joint committees, and there are many of these bodies in rural Saskatchewan.

However there are shortcomings in the present ad hoc approach to inter-municipal cooperation. These have been identified to us in surveys of urban and rural municipalities themselves. I experienced these obstacles myself during my years as reeve of the rural municipality of Corman Park. At present, cooperative arrangements have to be worked out over and over. There is uncertainty about the continuation of individual agreements. There is in fact a proliferation of boards and committees which strain community volunteers. There are limited opportunities for coordination among services and obstacles to achieving efficiencies.

The new Act will supplement the existing legislation. Those communities that prefer to continue to use the present approach to inter-municipal agreements will retain the option to do so, although the government will encourage municipalities to look carefully at using the new provisions.

Parallel legislative provisions are already available, with some differences, in British Columbia and Alberta. These have been in place for some years with extensive municipal participation already evolving over time. Legislation for Saskatchewan has been developed with reference to these two examples.

The idea for adopting this new approach was originally identified in the work of the Minister's Advisory Committee on

Inter-community Cooperation and Community Quality of Life in 1993. This committee included among its members, representatives from various municipalities, the past president of SARM, the current president of SUMA, and a professor from the University of Saskatchewan.

The committee's report focused on new strategies to manage change in the municipal sector. It identified service delivery as a key consideration. The committee recommended permissive legislation to allow municipalities to implement expanded regional service delivery on a voluntary basis. Subsequently, at the invitation of SUMA's task force on urban government renewal, the Department of Municipal Government prepared a concept paper on the approach. This was considered by the task force and reflected in its final recommendations.

(1500)

The idea of creating service districts to coordinate or deliver emergency services such as fire protection was also an integral part of a review of emergency and protective services undertaken over the past year and a half. SUMA, SARM, and other organizations participated in this review as members of the steering committee. A summary report which resulted from this review was distributed to municipalities.

There has been some discussion of this new Act in the media prior to its being tabled in the legislature. Some confusion has inadvertently arisen, it seems, as to what the new Act is and what it isn't. I want to clarify this, Mr. Speaker. In doing so, I particularly want to direct my comments to members of municipal councils. I have also written to mayors, reeves, and councils with the same objective.

This Act is not about mandatory municipal amalgamation. This Act is not a municipal amalgamation Act nor has any such Act been prepared. The Act focuses on making improvements in the delivery of services and does not restrict or reduce municipal autonomy or powers of governance. The new Act does not include provisions relating to amalgamation of municipalities.

Under this Act, service districts will be established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council either with the concurrence of municipalities or at their request.

A service district will be managed by a board of directors composed of representatives of the councils of member municipalities. It will offer a flexible menu of services within or to member municipalities as decided at the local level. These services can be delivered under various financing arrangements, including fees for services and charges back to municipalities — again as decided at the local level.

The board of directors will consist of representatives appointed from participating municipalities' municipal councils by those councils. This is to ensure direct accountability to participating municipalities.

An option is included for board members to represent more than one municipality. A chairperson will be selected by the board of directors from among its members. A person's term of

office on the board will coincide with his or her term as a municipal council member.

A service district will have a range of powers available to it related to the municipal services that it may deliver. Some consequential amendments to other Acts will also be made for this purpose. The Act includes a number of other administrative and legal provisions as well.

Mr. Speaker, based on my own experience in local government, I believe that this new Act opens doors for municipalities that are very much in the Saskatchewan tradition of cooperation and collaboration. Some may see new legislation that gives our communities new tools as a threat. I see it as providing new opportunities.

This Act leaves decisions very much at the local level — whether to use the provisions, what services to provide, what municipalities are included, financing arrangements, and so on. We cannot and must not be confined by the past. The Service Districts Act will help sustain services for the new century.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this House to support this step. I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I move that Bill No. 33, An Act respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts be now read a second time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it is only fitting that we take the time this afternoon to make a few comments before we would move to adjourn, so we can have a greater review of this Bill and piece of legislation that is set before us.

One of the concerns we have in our caucus, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that while the minister says that this Bill really is a nothing Bill and really doesn't interfere with the workings of municipalities and local governments, the fact is, Mr. Speaker . . . and we've seen this in the past, and our caucus on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, has warned the public of Saskatchewan of the problems that can be faced if they just listen to the rhetoric that has come from the government side of the House.

For example, Mr. Speaker, if we go back to the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) question in 1991, and we warned the public of what the government would do with the GRIP Bill. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, the government said no, we will do nothing to GRIP; in fact we will enhance the program. Well what happened as a result of the 1991 election? The GRIP Bill and the GRIP legislation was destroyed, and farmers were left without a security program that they could build their operations on and certainly take to the bank.

In this past election, Mr. Speaker, we warned the farmers of Saskatchewan that the government was going to send out bills. And the Premier . . . the former minister of Agriculture said that no, that would not happen. Elect us; I promise you; I assure you

that will not happen. However since the election has taken place, Mr. Speaker, what have we found? They indeed sent the bills out. I guess it's a matter of *déjà vu* all over again. I told you so has come to roost.

The problem we have with this Bill, Mr. Speaker . . . and while it doesn't necessarily or specifically say that amalgamations are in the works, this piece of legislation opens the door for the government through orders in council — it may not happen today, but opens the doors certainly in the future and even in the near future — for the government through orders in council and through regulations to now say to RMs (rural municipality) and local governments that we will enforce larger districts on you.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus has to ask the question: why is it necessary for this Bill? The minister tells us that it is appropriate for the Bill to come forward, that the Bill is needed to allow municipalities to cooperate in providing services.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I was on council in my community in my area for a number of years before coming to this Assembly. And I can assure you that on many occasions our RM worked at the local RM and communities in providing services. And that is available to individuals today. In fact the towns of Glenavon and the RM of Chester have already amalgamated their administrative services. The town of Windthorst, the village of Windthorst, is looking at, as soon as their administrator retires, the council is also already pursuing the matter of amalgamating their administrative services.

That, Mr. Speaker, tells me that that service is already out there and available to any RM, any council that would like to work together.

The minister says that it's difficult for RMs and municipal governments to provide economic development or to even look at the problem of garbage disposal. Well the Mainline Rural Development Corporation out of Grenfell, Mr. Speaker, is already working on a project with a number of communities in developing garbage management and that provision is already there.

So one has to ask, Mr. Speaker, with all the opportunities and rural governments already taking the initiative on their own to establish and cooperate and work together — all the things that the minister has talked about — one has to wonder why we specifically need a Bill to say we're going to make it easier, when governments are already working towards that.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many unanswered questions, while the minister would lead us to believe that even His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is in support of this Bill, there are so many questions that need to be addressed and raised that we . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now I think the member has been in the Assembly long enough to know that it is inappropriate to attempt to involve His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in debate in the Assembly. Order, order, order. Order. Order. The Speaker is not seeking advice from the members of the Assembly and I'll simply — order — I'll simply ask the

member to just withdraw the unparliamentary reference and continue with his remarks.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw those remarks and talk later. However, Mr. Speaker, in regard to that . . . in regard to the minister's . . . and I guess I'll have to tomorrow or when we get into further readings regarding this piece of legislation, I will quote from the minister's statement to the House regarding this Bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we take the time to sit back and review a little more carefully all the details of this Bill so that the people of this province and all the local governments have a better understanding of what is intended through this legislation. And therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Mines to move second reading of The Electrical Inspection Act, 1996. The electrical inspection department, in its efforts to become more efficient and customer focused, has taken the initiative towards implementing a system that would allow it to receive notices and permits by electronic means. It would certainly bring us into age with the services that are available through telecommunications, and through Internet, through e-mail, and other services that are now available.

The membership of the electric contractors within the province are very receptive to this and they are anxiously awaiting its implementation. The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993, as it now reads, provides contractors with the ability to give notices and permits to SaskPower only by prepaid first-class mail or hand delivery. Accordingly, this Bill would simply add to the existing provision of The Electrical Inspection Act, the right for contractors to give notices and permits by electronic means in addition to the existing methods.

This amendment would have a positive impact on both the operation and efficiency of the electrical inspection department, as well as potentially increasing its . . . or decreasing its operating costs and contractor operating costs.

Accordingly, I move second reading of The Electrical Inspection Act, 1996.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his remarks, and I truly do appreciate the fact that the whole thrust and intent of this legislation is to bring the inspection Act up into the 21st century.

I think it's a very appropriate thing to do. And as a very positive comment, I would actually encourage the government to look at other areas of their statutes that maybe have the same pony express kind of attitude to be brought into the 21st century as well. That would be a very positive step forward and

we certainly would encourage this to move forward to committee.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 14

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

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to have this chance to address the proposed amendment to The Saskatchewan Income Plan Amendment Act.

As seniors' critic for the official opposition, I feel it is my responsibility to follow any changes in legislation that could affect the seniors of our province, especially when the legislation involves the money they receive, as this proposed amendment does.

Mr. Speaker, someone must look out for the seniors in this province when it comes to these matters, and I'm not sure that the government is. In the Speech from the Throne, the issues facing seniors received very little attention. I can only assume that this means they have little interest in seniors.

This is particularly shameful because 10 years ago when the NDP was in opposition, the hon. member for Regina Dewdney said to the Tory administration, and I quote:

Your government is still not prepared to do anything to help those people between the ages of 60 and 65 who find themselves in dire straits. Many of them are ill or handicapped or widowed and therefore they do not have adequate income. But neither the government's pension plan, which is a vehicle to access money so that the government can help pay for its deficit, or this Bill, is going to help the people between the ages of 60 and 65.

So I know the members opposite will understand my concern about any changes that may affect the Saskatchewan Income Plan.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are no different than any of us when it comes to worrying about money. Like us, they strive for a decent quality of life. They want to know that the money they save will see them through the rest of their lives. People are living longer, and although that's a wonderful thing, it can mean that people may have to stretch money even further into their golden years.

(1515)

For many, many people this is a scary thought. So we must do

whatever we can to make sure that their financial security is not jeopardized in any way.

The Saskatchewan Income Plan is designed to give seniors some peace of mind. To receive benefits, a person must be a resident of Saskatchewan, be in receipt of a pension and a supplement, and meet other criteria in the regulations. What that means is that on average almost 21,000 people receive benefits under the plan every month.

In financial terms, the total amount paid out in benefits in the 1993-94 fiscal year was almost fourteen and a half million dollars. Under the current plan, the beneficiaries receive their cheques directly from the province. As I understand it, if this Act goes through, the Minister of Social Services would be permitted to enter into an agreement with the federal government which would permit the federal government to administer the Act and to make payments under the Act.

In a nutshell, this would mean that senior citizens who receive benefits under the federal government's Old Age Security and guaranteed income supplement would also receive their Saskatchewan Income Plan payments from the federal government. The total benefits will apparently remain exactly the same. Saskatchewan seniors will just be getting one cheque instead of two.

I also understand that if overpayments are made under the Saskatchewan Income Plan, they can be recovered by the Government of Canada under this agreement. Although we don't have serious concerns about the amount of money Saskatchewan seniors will receive, we do have some concerns about the cost of implementing the changes. We need to know if there will be any cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers if this system is turned over to the federal government, and secondly, what are the projected savings to our province in the long run?

I believe the members opposite will understand this concern as well because they have continued to bemoan the lack of money in our province, blaming the federal government at every opportunity.

If this amendment does appear to be beneficial to our province, we will support it fully. However, we would hope that the provincial government would stop blaming the federal government for all of their problems and openly recognize that the federal government is helping in this matter and many others.

We have been in touch with the federal Minister of Human Resources and have been informed that Saskatchewan officials are still in the discussion stage on this matter. In their estimation, if an agreement is reached, it would be for the purpose of merging technology.

However, because we are still not comfortable with all the details proposed in this amendment, we would like some more time to confer with lawyers, seniors, and other affected groups to determine how these changes will affect our province. Therefore I ask that this debate again be adjourned for further consideration.

The Speaker: — The question before the House is the motion to adjourn debate, moved by the hon. member for Humboldt. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Those opposed say no. In my opinion the no's have it. Debate continues.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat surprising that this House wouldn't allow for a little more of a process to review this piece of legislation.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Bill that's presented to this Assembly, if I'm not mistaken, a lot of the funding already is handled by the federal government, and basically it's tied to the federal pension plan. And the Saskatchewan Income Plan, senior supplement plan, kicks in based on what a person's income is. So I don't have a problem with us working together with the federal government, having that cheque come out once and for all.

But I think, as I look through the Bill, it would seem to me more appropriate that there should be more time, a little more time allowed to review this Bill in a little more detail to make sure that we are indeed addressing all the questions, so at the end of the day we are indeed making sure that the seniors of this province and their views . . . and we're protecting them. We're giving them the proper protection. And the fact that the funding that they should be having come into their possession is handled in an appropriate form that certainly meets their needs is . . . is efficient and is effective.

And therefore I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 14, as moved by the hon. member for Moosomin. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Those in favour say aye. Those opposed say no. In my opinion, the no's have it, and the motion is lost. Debate continues.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding that there was a prior arrangement to allow some debate to occur on this particular Bill, so I appreciate the opportunity. And we will adjourn it. And there will be ample time to discuss the merits of the Bill. I know the hon. members recognize that the seniors' portion is one important but very small piece of this particular Bill, as important as it is.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the hon. member from Humboldt, I would say that while we may have . . . in her capacity as the critic for seniors . . . certainly we have a long way to go, in Canada especially, with regard to income support for senior citizens. But I think it's fairly well accepted in Canada that we've done pretty well in Saskatchewan, relative to other provinces.

For example, you will know likely that, the member will know, that we're only one of three provinces with a seniors' income plan-like program where the provincial government is in fact topping up the income supplement. And I know that seniors appreciate that.

That program is so effective, in fact, that we have by far the lowest number of seniors — or percentage as well — of senior citizens on social assistance than any province. We have 300 seniors on social assistance in Saskatchewan; that's 300 too many. But out of 130,000 senior citizens in the province, only 300 are on social assistance. And that is because of programs like the seniors' income plan where very few provinces have such a plan. And that makes just the difference to take people over the social assistance rates. And I know that having been the minister for Seniors for two and a half years, while you can always do more, that that is appreciated by seniors.

I know that the member will be in touch with seniors' groups, and she will know that a far bigger concern of seniors' groups than this Bill — this Bill is not a concern to seniors' groups — but a far bigger concern is the recent federal budget and the long-term impact of low income seniors. And while Mr. Martin says that nine out of ten seniors will be better off, the reality is that that is not the case for many women, women especially between the ages 55 and 65 and certainly many women who are widowed. That will not be the case.

And I would like to send a copy over to the hon. member of two articles if I could, one by Leonard Shifren who I know all members will recognize as one of the most respected social policy journalists in Canada, who says that "The federal budget is important for what it does not say about pensions." And this is a very informative article which was in the *Star-Phoenix*.

I'll also send over a copy of the article by Jim Knisley, who says, "Nothing budget means lots to seniors." That's a headline. So I would, with respect, say to the hon. member that seniors' organizations in Saskatchewan are much more concerned about the impact of the federal budget on their long-term security and the security and income support programs than anything the province is or could do with regard to pensions.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member is right, as I understand it, that the senior's portion is simply that for administrative efficiency, and I might add a cooperation between governments — federal and provincial — that the cheque will be combined, one cheque instead of two.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do is to address my comments on this particular Bill to the history of the social assistance program as I understand it. And I've studied this for some twenty years or so, so I've got some things I think are important to say in this regard.

I'd like to talk about some of the case-load changes, some of the key issues that are driving the reform, and then focus on the redesign provisions themselves. And in this regard I would like to commend the Minister of Social Services from Moose Jaw Wakamow and his staff, client groups, and community groups for their input with regard to the redesign.

And I've had the opportunity to talk to many groups in the community, and I of course, I am well aware of the public meetings that the minister had which were very well attended by hundreds and hundreds of client advocates and clients themselves, that by and large this redesign discussion paper is

very well received, which does make me a little bit sad to see the member from Humboldt's resolution — in the blue book — her resolution about condemning the discussion paper. And the only conclusion I could come to is that the member has not read the discussion paper because it does deal with, it does deal with the issues that she says she is concerned about.

So I would suggest to the member from Humboldt that there are some things that she could learn if she comes in with an open mind. And if she has an open mind and is inclined not to be so politically partisan than to sort of learn what she can learn here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the history, the history of the social assistance program, it was designed of course, has always been designed in Canada to be a program of last resort. That is the way the program was designed, where people's basic needs were met. And, Mr. Speaker, the program was designed over 30 years ago.

I might add, like medicare, we designed a program ourself and went it alone without the federal support. I don't know if the member is aware of that, but 1966, later that year the Canada Assistance Plan was established. And the reason it was established, the reason the Canada Assistance Plan was established then, is just as valid as today when the federal government is phasing it out at the end of this month. And that is to provide consistency across Canada on certain basic rights — five basic rights in the Canada Assistance Plan which will be gone in about 10 days, Mr. Speaker, related to standardization and equal cost-sharing and so on.

And the federal presence was felt to be important at that time because of the loose federation and the importance of making sure that people could move from province to province. And the Canada Assistance Plan had allowed that to occur with a reasonable amount of consistency from province to province.

Now the program as intended and developed was such that the numbers were small, the numbers on assistance were small. There were very few employable clients on assistance. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, people were on for short periods of time because through their own resources they were able to get back into the labour force.

So on balance, on balance the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan in cooperation with the Canada Assistance Plan has served low income people reasonably well over the years, up until the last 10 years or so.

Now, Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that certain changes, major changes, have been undergone in society over the last number of years. The employable rate at the time . . . the unemployment rate at the time of the development, the evolution of the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, was 4 per cent. Now of course it's 10 per cent, roughly 10 per cent across Canada, and in some provinces twice that. So that's been a major change, Mr. Speaker.

Although the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan has been modified and adapted a little bit as things have shifted over the years, there have been no fundamental changes in the program for

some 30 years, and the program has not been rebuilt. And many would argue now that it is not even meeting the basic needs that families and children and individuals have.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, not to just simply throw a program out because it is time for change, that we have tried to carefully analyse what's working and what isn't and, in our discussions with clients and community groups, to try and build on what works. I think that's what the design is trying to do.

But the reality is across Canada that unemployment rates have doubled and tripled over the last 30 years since the program was designed. And I think another thing that went along with this is, unemployment rates rose and there became more structural unemployment. The fundamental program in Canada that supported unemployed people, that being the unemployment insurance program, has been drastically reduced as a front-line program and consequently in all provinces has shifted from income supports federally through the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) program to social assistance programs in every province.

And especially of significance is the increases of employable people on case-loads across Canada, the increases in the number that they designate as employable. And of course the concern here is that of the notion of dependency: employable people being dependent on social assistance. And this has increased of course due to the higher unemployment rate and the greater numbers — I think all members would agree — who are lacking the prospects for longer-term, secure, sustainable employment that adequately meets their needs.

So, Mr. Speaker, over the last 30 years we have seen the numbers increase across Canada. Now we still have the lowest percentage. Between us and Alberta, we have the lowest percentage of our population on assistance of any other province. And while we are proud of that on the one hand, that's not good enough, and we need to even do more.

(1530)

So it is higher than we would like. But what we do not want to do is to trap people on assistance, which is the big concern that we have. People want their independence. They want to be able to make their own decisions and choices. They want to be able to participate meaningfully in their communities. They want opportunities. And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps most of all, they want to preserve their dignity and have a sense of hope about the future for they and their children. That's what people want.

We are in a situation again in Saskatchewan, but across Canada, where half of the people on assistance, more or less half, are what we would say employable, traditionally employable. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, they do not have the skills. A lot of those people do not have the skills to get a job today and to compete in the market and require further education and training.

They also in many cases need additional supports, like child care. Literally 35 per cent of the social assistance case-load are single-parent mothers. That's why I'm so sad to see the federal

government just simply cancel the red book commitment on \$750 million in day care. That is going to be devastating, Mr. Speaker, because most provinces can't adequately fund child care on their own to the degree that it's needed.

And I'm still hoping that the hon. member from Humboldt can join with us on this side and urge the federal government not to cancel . . . join in an important venture and that is to try and get the federal government to . . .

An Hon. Member: — In spirit . . .

Mr. Pringle: — In spirit, yes. In spirit. And with her signature — well, even join us — to in fact encourage the federal government to honour its commitment, at least partially, to meet some of the child care needs in Canada that exist.

This is a very serious matter. I know we're having a bit of fun here, but this is a very serious matter and I know the members know that.

Mr. Speaker, it will be virtually impossible for a lot of these women to move off of assistance into the labour market, into training programs, and into participation in the community without the combined efforts of the federal and the provincial governments on child care programing. And I certainly know that Mr. Axworthy personally — personally — was very supportive and he understood that concept, but he just simply was not able to get the money from his colleagues, and hopefully the new minister will be able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to remember, to reinforce, that people on assistance do want to work. They need, though, to be able to earn enough money to make it worthwhile, to not be trapped on assistance, so that they can become fully independent. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, despite some of the perceptions, the reality is that 1,000 people in Saskatchewan on assistance work full time. And about 4,600 clients on assistance work part-time — in many cases two or three part-time jobs — so that's about 5,600 clients on assistance who actually work.

But, Mr. Speaker, it would take 8 or 9 or 10 or \$12 an hour under the current systems that we have in order not to be dependent on social assistance, and there just isn't a market to increase minimum wage to that degree. But it would take that kind of minimum wage. So people are working on assistance, contributing, earning about \$20 million a year.

So as I said, half the clients are, what we would say, employable but not really necessarily all employable in today's market. The other half are, really, partially employable, partially are unemployable because of maybe a physical or an emotional, mental disability, or it could be lack of education, training, and proper experience. But the point is, they're unable to support themselves and they're unable to get off assistance.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're still poor, though. For those who aren't employable, they're still poor, and something has to be done. And I think the redesigned proposal offers a solution there, Mr. Speaker.

Now there are many income support programs like the Canada Pension Plan, Workers' Comp, UIC, and those of course traditionally have only been available to people who are working. Those programs have not been available to people who are not working in the labour force.

So this group, this other 50 per cent who are not employable, require additional help, Mr. Speaker, by federal and provincial governments. And I would say that there's some interest with the federal government as well in income support programs for disabled persons. So I know the Minister of Social Services is pursuing that with his counterparts.

As I said earlier, seniors, we've got some ways to go, but fortunately only 300 of 130,000 on assistance, and I think that is great. But I wanted to highlight that women between 55 and 65 who do not have any kind of pension, something just has got to be done for those women. And we believe that the reform paper offers some support there. It may not be perfect but we would welcome any ideas that any members of the House have.

Mr. Speaker, so I tried to give some background about the development of social assistance when first initiated and what are some of the changing dynamics over the years that in fact make the case-load composition different and require some reform initiatives.

I think there are other key issues driving reform, and I'd like to highlight just a few of those, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the demise of the Canada Assistance Plan requires all provinces to reform their social assistance programs.

Now I'd like to think . . . well in fact I like to think I know that it's generally well regarded across Canada that the Saskatchewan paper. . . I would inform the House that I know, for example, that having discussed these issues with Lloyd Axworthy, he feels that these are very positive initiatives.

I know from having discussed this paper with the Hon. James Smith from Nova Scotia, the Liberal minister, that Dr. Smith endorses many of the initiatives in this paper. I also know that B.C. (British Columbia) does.

And what I would say is that Mr. Axworthy federally, personally; Dr. Smith, the Liberal minister from Nova Scotia; the B.C. government and us are in step on the kinds of reforms that are an alternative to the punitive measures that we see in Alberta, Ontario, and recently you would know that Manitoba's announced a cut of 10 per cent in their rates.

This is a different vision, and I think this is the vision that gives better vision. It gives people, low income people and unemployed people, some hope for the future because it's based on a compassionate approach, on a fair approach, and an approach which protects people who are most vulnerable.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the key issues driving reform across Canada, of course, is the elimination of the Canada Assistance Plan, come April 1, being replaced with the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer), which basically combines health, education, social services programing . . . by 106 million this

year, 200 million next year. It gives provinces more flexibility but, Mr. Speaker, a lot less money to work with.

What I'm concerned about with the loss of the Canada Assistance Plan is more that it actually will mean there will be a patchwork program across Canada. And we're seeing the development of that again already. Which again, as I say, means that we'll lose the reason that the Canada Assistance Plan came into initially.

The second key issue, Mr. Speaker, that drives this of course, is the actual reduction itself in the transfer payments. Now it's not a matter of blaming Ottawa for Saskatchewan's woes. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have picked up about \$70 million in costs. And the Finance critic will know this. In fact he says, in the Moose Jaw paper, 64 million loss in transfers this year. And I respect his figures, although ours don't agree with that. But I respect his figures; he got them from somewhere.

But what he's forgetting is that we've already picked up about 70 million on the last two rounds of UIC cuts. And the fact that now we're responsible, as first nations leave reserve, immediately for their social assistance. So it's more like 140 million. Even using his figures, that isn't insignificant, Mr. Speaker. So the reductions in funding are creating some need to redesign the program.

And, Mr. Speaker, the shifting cost to the province in the health, education, and social services sector is creating a challenge, to put it mildly.

Mr. Speaker, leaving the treaty responsibility with regard to the federal government aside, it challenges the province to try and respond in a humane, compassionate way, which is why we picked that cost up to start with. It challenges us to redesign the program to meet people's basic needs.

I think a third factor driving the redesign, Mr. Speaker, relates to the economy and labour market changes over the years, where our unemployment rate might still be the lowest in Canada. It certainly is. And our economy has performed well relative to other provinces, Mr. Speaker. In 1995 our economy performed well in the agricultural sector, in the resource sector, housing, retail, tourism. And our *Partnership for Renewal* has been successful; our *Partnership for Growth* builds on that. So the prospects economically are good for the province, but there's no question that in every province and in the country as a whole the global economy and expanded international trade . . . We see the phase-out of the Crow and the deregulation policies. These have resulted in changes in the structure of Saskatchewan's labour force.

So, Mr. Speaker, if one takes the politics out of all of this, Mr. Speaker, everybody would have to agree that it is harder to get a job, to find secure work, to find full-time work. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that if you do not have at least a grade 12, it's very difficult to get a job even flipping burgers or anything these days because that's kind of the level at which people — employers — weed people out, so to speak.

So, Mr. Speaker, children's needs often exceed their earning potential. That's one of our challenges. Their needs often exceed their earning potential.

A fourth issue driving reform is the fact that we're losing ground in Canada on the family poverty front. Across Canada, Mr. Speaker, income is the most important determinant of health. We know that. The implications of low income and poverty on health and well-being is well known, Mr. Speaker. This is why we brought in the health care reform measures with regard to health promotion and prevention and so on.

So research has demonstrated that long-term poverty contributes to lifelong disadvantages for people, such as poor education, poor health, poor employment prospects, and family problems. And we just simply have to, Mr. Speaker, do something in Canada about the growing poverty rate where 20 per cent of Canadian families are living in poverty. And probably you could add another 10 per cent or so because those people just living above the poverty line are not doing much better. So, Mr. Speaker, the level of poverty in Canada, in Saskatchewan, is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the fifth key issue in the reform is the need for the supports and the tools to be provided to people so that they're not trapped in social assistance. Mr. Speaker, it has to be that people are better off working than they are on SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan). Otherwise they're not going to be able to get off assistance; they're going to be trapped.

The earning exemption is too low. People lose their health care benefits as they go off assistance. And of course, if you're on assistance the maintenance payment is deducted. And again these design measures in the proposal are designed to deal with all of those.

So, Mr. Speaker, social assistance in Canada today is not, as it's designed and operating in every province, is not a route out of poverty. Nor is it today in many cases a satisfactory transition to sustainable jobs. Our government is committed to seeking programs and solutions to protect the most vulnerable citizens. Mr. Speaker, it's critical that ways be found to provide individuals, children, youth and families with an adequate level of benefits, opportunities for training and support, and ways to move in to the work force.

So, Mr. Speaker, the goals in the paper, the philosophical framework if you will, is to protect those who need to be protected the most, firstly; secondly, to enhance the tools that people need, the bridges to secure training, education, employment opportunities for them; thirdly, to reduce poverty; fourthly, to support participation into the economic and social life in our communities; and of course fifthly, to simplify the program.

(1545)

Those are the goals of the redesign, Mr. Speaker, and of course, as I say, it is a different set of goals than our neighbouring provinces have in the redesign of their programs. We believe that our program in social assistance, our redesigned proposals,

are not unrelated. We believe in holistic approaches. We believe in integrated strategies, and that's the centre-piece of our action plan for children . . . community driven, where the community prioritizes their challenges, seeks the solutions and then the strategies unfold.

So whether it's the *Agriculture 2000* paper, the *Partnership for Renewal*, now the *Partnership For Growth*, the Future Skills programs, or the social assistance redesign, Mr. Speaker, the approach basically is that the communities have been involved, and the communities look at these issues as issues not in a compartmentalised way, as we've tended to in the past, but in a holistic way.

And I might say, Mr. Speaker, that the National Anti-Poverty Organization, Bonnie Morton being the local representative from Saskatchewan, believes that Saskatchewan's approach — balancing the budget by increasing the strength in the economy and education and training programs, and not cutting social service programs — is the model in Canada. They've reaffirmed that publicly when they met in Saskatchewan recently, wanting to meet here because this is the approach that they believe is the one that is the approach which will in a meaningful way help people. So we got the support from the national perspective as well in terms of this approach.

Mr. Speaker, on the redesign . . . and I know it's been a concern for the member from Humboldt that we deal with family poverty, child poverty. We know that half of the beneficiaries on assistance are children.

What the Saskatchewan child benefit would do, Mr. Speaker, would be to provide additional support for low income families whether they're on assistance or not on assistance, based on their income, to lift them up higher than the social assistance levels. It would also make work pay for families. In other words, they could earn more before their benefits are deducted if they're on assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, it would be . . . how it would work: it would be a low income supplement. You would take the benefits for children out of social assistance and of course for families not on assistance too. It would support them.

Another important provision, Mr. Speaker, in the child benefit is that families, when they came off social assistance, would not lose their health care benefits. So they would still maintain their optical, dental, and other services as if they were on assistance, and that is a way to support the low income working poor rather than leaving them on their own. That satisfies a major concern where people are afraid to come off of assistance because they get too much deducted or they don't have their health care benefits. Again I can tell you that we're the only province looking at that.

The second provision, Mr. Speaker, is the working income supplement. As I said earlier, you would need 9 or 10 or \$12 an hour in many cases to get off assistance. And if that isn't on, on minimum wage, the society has to find other ways to bring people up to that level of support. So it would be an opportunity to increase the earnings. And in addition, it would

be an opportunity and make it worth it to pursue child maintenance because that as well would be taken into account and be exempted.

It would come in the form of a monthly supplement for low income families based on the amount of money they earn and the maintenance that they receive. So it would have the benefit of topping up wages and topping up the maintenance payments. We're talking primarily here about women and their children. So it would allow families, we believe.

The model is good. The design is good. It depends how much money you put into that. It would allow families to in fact be independent of social assistance.

Now back in late 1994, we had negotiated with Mr. Axworthy where in fact there would be a Canada-Saskatchewan child benefit which was really quite exciting because the federal government, the province would in fact combine forces to have a family poverty strategy. Now again, Mr. Axworthy personally was committed to that. In fact he agreed to a letter with the Saskatchewan government on that kind of a program, five-year program. Again unfortunately, he was not able to get that through his cabinet which was again the missed opportunity to deal with family poverty.

Again in a way . . . and I can tell the House, as the Minister of Social Services will know, that every single province that is interested in helping low income people . . . but the Liberal minister in Nova Scotia is very interested in our child benefit proposal. They see it as one of the innovative ways to bring families up out of poverty, and they're looking at modelling it. And the opposition members might want to talk to Dr. Smith in Nova Scotia about his views.

I think a third important provision, Mr. Speaker, relates to young people on assistance. Now the numbers are climbing, Mr. Speaker, and as the Minister of Social Services has pointed out in the consultations of the discussion paper, that I believe 70 per cent of the 5,000 young people on assistance under the age of 22 do not have a grade 12; 30 per cent do not have a grade 10 even. So given what I said about the grade 12 being sort of the bottom level that you need in order to even have the opportunity to go for an interview, that issue has to be addressed. Seventy per cent of those young people need greater education, and they need to develop a greater skill level.

So the paper deals with young people on assistance and their future. And we all have got to cooperate here to make sure that we prepare young people who want to work, who want opportunities, that we make sure that they don't lose hope early in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, when you add the demographics in this province of young people who are anywhere from 8 to 12 or 13 today, moving into the 15 to the 22 age group, then this program for youth makes a lot of sense because the demographics are very alarming here. And we just simply have to provide opportunities, guarantee opportunities for young people for further education, further retraining, and ways to move into the labour force and to participate in the community in many ways.

So the youth future's program does this. Anyone under 22 will have the opportunity for positive activities. And of course an important part of that is to remain connected to your family because we want to make sure that we provide specific support to families who recognize it's their responsibility to provide for the children. In many cases, some of these other provisions will give them the additional supports where they'll be able to do that. So the emphasis on the youth future's program is family connections, the importance of education, retraining, additional training, and work experiences.

Mr. Speaker, there are other proposals in the paper that speak to issues like the provincial training allowance. That's very important too because right now if you're in a training program, you get whatever the going rate is. It has no connection to your family's size or your basic budget needs.

In the redesigned proposal, families would get a training allowance based on the family needs, family size, and again gives them the best shot at a meaningful income. So the nature of training allowances would change and taking the welfarism, so to speak, out of the whole concept of training. We believe that's a positive initiative. And of course the enhanced child maintenance initiatives . . . and some of those I think would be complemented by the Bill that entered second reading today on child maintenance.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, let me say that these proposals in the redesigned paper on social assistance are getting a very positive response across Saskatchewan, and it is a discussion paper for that very purpose. The concepts are outlined. The value base is there. The key issues, the reasons that the redesign needs to occur, is in the paper.

And if this paper is implemented, I think it would continue the tradition of Saskatchewan being a social policy innovator and an innovator of income support programs which have then been modelled, in many cases, by other governments across Canada.

So I would like to say that to those involved, it is a good piece of work. It has been recognized by social policy people who have got experience in the field. It is a complex area. There are no simplistic solutions to income support programs and training programs and their relationship to work. And there's jurisdictional considerations if there's money involved. This might be one of the most intellectually challenging areas of public policy. I would say it may very well be. So it is not easy, and it requires the energy and support of all members of the House and the ideas. What it doesn't require is the punitive approach of Alberta and Ontario. They are going to pay big time in the future; there is no doubt about that.

And I think the biggest ways in which the official opposition could help in this approach in this redesign would be to encourage their federal counterparts to look at joint funding in some of the initiatives. And I think that when they have a chance to ask their questions and to feel a better comfort level with the paper, I'm sure that they will do what they can to encourage the federal government to maintain that national role, that national presence, in income support programs, especially related to Canadians who feel the most vulnerable.

The *Leader-Post* on January 12, '96 the headline, says: Welfare proposals fresh and innovative. They make the point that I have been trying to make, that it is the most progressive approach in Canada and not to be . . . not discarded but ought to be supported and built upon.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, no family should have to rely on social assistance to meet their basic children's needs in the view of this government. Low-income families need supports, tools, bridges, incentives in order to earn more money that they can keep. It gives them the best shot at being independent from social assistance.

Young people need opportunities for going back to school if necessary, staying in school, better training programs, better links to employment. And the paper addresses that, as will the initiatives of the hon. Minister of Post-Secondary Education . . . some of the ideas to make those links, and we're working very closely on that.

Mr. Speaker, those in-training programs need to make sure that training allowances are suitable for their needs. And of course if this paper was implemented, I feel very confident that the numbers on social assistance would drop over time. People would feel better about themselves. They would be contributing as a tax base, and of course the cost of social assistance would drop. And the paper also talks about simplifying the program. This paper will prepare us for the 21st century in this area as well. The hon. member from Melfort was talking about the need to move into the 21st century on a previous Bill. I'm sure he would agree that this design paper, this discussion paper, moves us into the 21st century.

So this side of the House, we accept the challenge to redesign the program, to rebuild it so that it meets the needs of all low-income people in the province. And it's a design, Mr. Speaker, that will work. I'm confident that it'll work, but we do need positive — we don't need condemnation — we need positive suggestions from all members of the House, and that way Saskatchewan people, especially low-income people and seniors and young people, will see that there's something here that works for them and that we've all got their best interests in mind.

So in closing, I support the Bill and look forward to other members' comments about it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should say. I want to begin by commending the member for Saskatoon Eastview who just has spoken. As the former minister of Social Services, I think he's actually rather modest in his remarks about this social service reform program that the government has embarked on. And I say that he is rather modest in his remarks because he is one of the principal architects in the present government for this design or redesign of social services in our province.

I want to begin by echoing his remarks that there needs to be from Saskatchewan people positive suggestions for change. It's all too easy for anyone of us in our own family life or in our larger public life to come up with criticisms of the way things are. Criticism is very easy in any dimension of life. It's much harder to come up with positive, concrete, tangible, workable suggestions that can improve the functioning of a family or a marriage or a program such as social services which is delivered by government.

I think one of the principal concerns for me in Bill No. 14, as brief as it is . . . it's only a page and a half long. One of my principal concerns is that this is the key. This legislation is the key to protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and Saskatchewan has had a long and distinguished tradition of doing precisely that: taking care of those people who need to be taken care of. And as the former minister, the member from Eastview, has pointed out, fully half of the people on social services right now are people who need assistance. They're people who have physical or mental or emotional disabilities.

Now this takes us back to a long-standing principle of Saskatchewan people from our pioneer days, namely that we are our brother or our sister's keeper. It's a biblical principle basically — it comes from the scriptures — a tradition of caring and sharing and community and compassion that says we have a responsibility to one another and for one another.

And so what does this social services reform agenda mean for me? It means that my neighbour does not have to be in need, and that's important for me. I happen to be fortunate enough to have enough to meet my needs. But I know many people in my community, and I know many people in this province who don't have enough to meet their needs. I know people who need assistance, and they get some assistance from family and friends.

But all too often there are people who fall between the cracks and don't receive the assistance they need for health and for food and for shelter and for services for their children. And that's what this legislation is about: a key to unlock positive social services, to find new solutions for Saskatchewan people so that we can continue the tradition of being our brother or our sister's keeper and so that our neighbours do not have to be in need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, poverty and hunger are an enemy of all of us. Even if we are not poor ourselves or if we are not hungry ourselves, poverty and hunger are an enemy of all of us, not just an enemy of the poor or the hungry. Poverty and the hunger are enemies of all of us because they destabilize society. They exaggerate the differences between people in very profound ways and are life threatening. They rob us all of community and dignity and security and peace. And that's why this government is committed to reforming our social services programs so that they are sustainable into the 21st century and that we can continue our tradition of being our brother and our sister's keeper.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Speaker, this government and this piece of legislation is concerned with protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

Now the problem that we are experiencing presently in Saskatchewan, and indeed across Canada, is that that is becoming increasingly difficult for any government to do, especially for any provincial government. The federal government essentially wants to wash its hands of the expensive human services. Health, education, and social services are the three largest expenditures here in the Government of Saskatchewan in that order.

Fully a billion dollars . . . a billion and a half dollars a year, one third of our provincial budget, a billion and a half dollars a year is spent here in the province of Saskatchewan simply to keep people healthy. Almost another billion dollars is spent each and every year in the province of Saskatchewan to ensure that people can have an education and a future thereby. And the third largest expenditure, regrettably, is interest on the public debt. But shortly after that is expenditure on human services for social services.

Now the problem that we have here in Saskatchewan is that given the magnitude of these expenditures on human services — health, education, and social services — the federal government is making a fundamental decision in principle to get out of funding human services and transferring that responsibility to the provinces. And that means for the province of Saskatchewan, in cold cash terms this year, \$100 million less for the provision of these services in our province, with \$100 million to follow, another additional \$100 million to follow in the next calendar year.

This is a big problem for the province of Saskatchewan. And the problem with these federal cut-backs, I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, isn't simply that it means less money for our province. It isn't just the dollars that counts.

For me, the fundamental problem with these federal cuts are what they mean for our vision of society, what kind of society we want to build, not just here in Saskatchewan but across our country, and what it means, not just in terms of dollars but in terms of turning our backs on those who need our help — those who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities, fully half of those who are on social services in our province.

Finally social service reform comes down to the question of what kind of society we want to build, what kind of people we want to be, whether we want to be our brother or our sisters' keepers, and what kind of values we hold to, whether we are concerned about those who are most vulnerable in our society, or whether we are concerned primarily with ourselves and ourselves alone.

A major study has been done on American society, Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently, and it shows that American society south of the border is increasingly characterized by a lack of trust — a lack of trust not just in politicians and in governmental institutions, public institutions, but a profound lack of trust on the part of American people, a lack of trust in their neighbours,

in their employers, in their fellow employees, in their teachers, and their religious leaders, even in their sports and entertainment figures. A fundamental lack of trust in men and women around them throughout American society.

And no society can be stable and strong when it's built on insecurity. And that's why in this province of Saskatchewan we are taking steps with this legislation to build a stronger, more secure Saskatchewan. And that's why this Bill 14 is amending the Saskatchewan Income Plan so that we can build a stronger and better society that better provides for the needs of those who are most vulnerable in our midst.

Some of the key issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this amendment of the Saskatchewan Income Plan. First of all I've talked a bit about the demise of federal assistance in funding for human services, \$100 million less this year, with another subsequent \$100 million less next year. That is a key issue that needs to be addressed and is addressed through this legislation.

Another key issue is not just the funding for human services, the \$100 million less. There are also increasing shifts of the burden for training programs for example, for employment programs from the federal government to the provincial government. Changes also to unemployment insurance, which I'm sure people are aware of over the last five years.

Unemployment insurance changes have included lower income benefits for people and shorter periods of time for the payment of benefits, which have forced more and more employable people to turn to social assistance for income support. And now there are further cuts in store for unemployment insurance this year.

Indeed this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the first time social assistance expenditures in our province will exceed for the first time, expenditures for unemployment insurance. Imagine that.

This is a profound shift, not just in terms of federal offloading, but in terms of the orientation of the provincial government and its responsibilities for the unemployed, not only for those who require assistance because of their physical, emotional needs.

The federal government in 1993, also which should be noted, withdrew from providing social assistance for first nations people living off reserve in Saskatchewan. And this in itself in 1993 has added \$40 million to the annual budget of Saskatchewan Social Services. Clearly we have to make profound changes in the design and structuring of our Social Services program whether we want to or not. And this government is committed to making those changes. There are changes also in the economy and in the labour market that dictate that we need to change our orientation to Social Services.

In Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's shameful that fully one in five children live in families with incomes below the Statistics Canada low income cut-off line. That means fully one in five children live in families in poverty in our country. And the number is far too high here in Saskatchewan.

We simply don't have the luxury of sitting on our hands and doing nothing or of wringing our hands and doing nothing. We need to protect the most vulnerable in our society. We need to reduce disincentives to work. We need to attack poverty and its effects on people. We need to encourage participation in the economy, and not just encourage it, but provide people with the tools and incentives to participate in the economy and in the job market. And we need also to simplify the administrative structures that have grown over the years, and this we are committed to doing in Bill 14 as we amend The Saskatchewan Income Plan Act.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say again that Saskatchewan has a long and proud tradition of innovation in social policy, a principle and a value and a commitment to putting people first, to being our brother or our sister's keeper, and that this legislation and the amendments to the Saskatchewan Income Plan will continue this tradition of progressive legislation for people and their needs here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Koenker: — Many provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many provinces, most provinces in our country, have taken another approach; to punish the poor, to reduce financial benefits, to tighten ineligibility, to institute residency requirements. We here in Saskatchewan believe there is a better way, and that way is to redesign social assistance — not to punish people but to provide the help that they need. And with a redesigned system, no family will have to rely on social assistance for their children's basic needs.

Secondly, low income working people will have an incentive to earn as much as possible, and to keep it. Novel thought.

Thirdly, youth would be involved in productive activity such as education or work experience so that they can have a future that is more than receiving a pay cheque from government, on social assistance.

Fourthly, that all persons attending training would receive the same level of financial help based on family size, and that the administration of funding for training and these programs would be simplified so they could concentrate on their training program and not cutting through bureaucratic red tape.

And fifthly, that the number of individuals and families who are dependent on social assistance, over a period of time would begin to drop in our province and the cost of social assistance programs would be reduced.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, most importantly of all for me with this legislation, is the principle that it upholds that we protect the most vulnerable in our society and we provide for those who are most needy in our society. And that is a long and cherished Saskatchewan tradition that I am proud to say this government is upholding and carrying forth almost alone across the Dominion of Canada.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like, with those remarks, to move adjournment of the debate on Bill No. 14, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Income Plan Act. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that there are a number of issues on this particular Bill though, that members on this side of the House did have some concerns with and had tried to adjourn the Bill earlier. So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that at this time it would be appropriate to adjourn this piece of legislation.

I would move adjournment of debate, Mr. Speaker, on this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The hon. member from Saskatoon Sutherland has adjourned debate already.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 16

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 16 — An Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise, Mr. Speaker, to make some general comments with respect to Bill No. 16, which is An Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act and known by the short title, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1996.

In perusing the proposed legislation, I have come to the understanding that this Bill is primarily one of a housekeeping nature in that it sets out first, to provide for the definition of an agricultural implement; second, to set a policy of paying members of the Highway Traffic Board; and thirdly, to make provision for the safer operation of a vehicle transporting cargo.

Mr. Speaker, we have no difficulty in ensuring the appropriate definition of an agricultural implement. What we have difficulty with is that the definition is to be determined by regulations. But that regulations, further on in the Bill, is set to be set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or in other words the cabinet, on the advice of bureaucrats. It is this area that we have some difficulties with.

A few days ago in the legislature I spoke about the “we know best” approach that governments utilize in developing programs, and yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, legislation. I spoke about the desire to have less interference in our lives. And, Mr. Speaker, I fear that when we allow the bulk of the meat of proposed legislation to be done by regulation by the cabinet in the secrecy of the cabinet room, we allow the opportunity for more interference which could be counterproductive, in fact do harm, just like GRIP.

It has been said that the devil is in the detail. And we have seen this on so many other occasions by this government, Mr. Speaker. In its first term, for instance, we came to see the regulations proclaimed under The Labour Standards Act. When

cabinet gets to make the decision without the input of the legislature, there is created the opportunity for more and more control, which might not be appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to give appropriate consideration to legislation and if there are to be regulations, why are the regulations not tabled by the government with the legislation? It is high time, Mr. Speaker, that this government lay all the information on the Table. If we are moving to the new century, as we hear from the Premier and from the members opposite . . . and if I recall from the Premier during the election standing in his office, staring out the window, looking into the new century — if he's really looking into the distance, then why doesn't the Premier be prepared to make some changes?

I just recently heard from the member opposite from Saskatoon Eastview about being open-minded. Mr. Member, let's be open-minded. Let's put everything on the table. Let's bring the regulations into the public where we can talk about them. He talked about moving into the 21st century. Let's move into the 21st century and deal with some of these regulations in the open. I challenge that the government lead by example and change the way the legislation is proposed and considered by us as lawmakers.

Mr. Speaker, once again what we are seeing is the government throwing 100 Bills at this House with little background and the expectation that this House will deal with the legislation in a quick fashion. How long, Mr. Speaker, has the government considered this or any of the legislation before the House? I have to ask this question: is this the most effective manner to deal with it? The answer . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and I hear the member opposite saying, no it's not the most appropriate way to deal with it.

And what about good governance? What the bureaucrats have had months to consider, we only see for a short time, and you expect the lawmakers to absorb and consider with very little time and information, Mr. Speaker.

So back to this Bill, back to this Bill. We will want to know a lot more about the issue of paying or reimbursing members of the Highway Traffic Board. We will want to know what the reimbursement process has been, what is the necessity of change, and why is this being addressed now. We will also want to know if the proposal for reimbursement is open-ended, or if there are caps on the number of days or meetings for which the board members will be paid. Many unanswered questions, Mr. Speaker.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, while this Bill may seem brief in nature, it does raise a number of fundamental questions, and I would like to address a lot of these in the committee process. And I think we can do that, Mr. Speaker, so I'll not hold up debate any further.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe there are some issues in this Bill that, before we get to Committee of the Whole, should be pointed out to the minister

so that he can have his explanations and clarifications prepared before we reach Committee of the Whole. Because I do have some concerns with some of the wording in the Bill that needs to be clarified to determine whether or not the explanations being given in the notes and the wording of the Bill are exactly what the minister intended to have happen.

I'm glad to see though that he's bringing in some changes to the agricultural implementation regulations. I think those have been needed for a period of time and I was glad to see that that's going to happen.

But some of the areas that I do have some concerns with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, concern the provisions for remunerations for board members. I would have to wonder what scale the board members were being paid on prior to this Bill being brought forward because now they're going on to the civil service rate that regular employees of the province receive. And I think that we need to take a look at what those members were being paid beforehand.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, sir, the questions of exemptions on following . . . or obeying the traffic rules of this province. It says in the Bill that you have to follow all the traffic rules except when told to do something otherwise by a traffic control device. Well, Mr. Speaker, at times these traffic control devices fail. If you are to follow their indications, their signals, but which contravene The Highway Traffic Act, somebody is going to get themselves into trouble, Mr. Speaker, by following these devices when they're not operating properly. There's going to be a resulting infraction.

And I think that the minister needs to clarify that when we get to Committee of the Whole as to what exactly he means and at what times. If the person driving down the road knows and realizes that the traffic device is not operating properly, are they still compelled to follow the directions of the traffic control device?

So that's one of the areas that needs to be clarified, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this issue. So I would hope that the minister, when he comes back to the House for Committee of the Whole, will have some explanations prepared for that particular concern that we have.

And I believe that, Mr. Speaker, those are two of the concerns that I wanted to direct to the minister so he can be aware of it when he comes forward to the House later. Thank you.

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

Bill No. 23

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 23 — An Act to amend The Archives Act** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss The Archives Amendment Act in this Assembly on behalf of the Liberal caucus. Although the word archives does

not instil the sense of a long, controversial debate, I think it is important to assure any changes made to the provincial Archives Act will adequately protect the documents of our past, present, and future.

Archiving materials is about recording history as accurately as possible and the documents we preserve today will serve as a guide for future generations to come. Photos, letters, books, materials, and even the decisions we make in this House may someday be used to shape future decisions in this province.

Some of the changes proposed are very straightforward, including the recommendation to increase the number of board members from the current five to a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine. All appointments are made by the Lieutenant Governor after he receives a nomination from each of the universities and two from the public service.

I also understand this Bill will also change the criteria for honoraria. Currently, only the expenses of the members were paid. If this amendment is passed, members that are not employed by either the university or the public service will receive an honoraria at a rate approved by the Lieutenant Governor.

The amendment also deals with accountability. The changes to the Act would allow the board to enter into agreements for services such as office space, accounting, auditing, and personal services, inside or outside Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I have some deep concerns about this ability to look outside for services.

If this government is serious about creating jobs within Saskatchewan and improving our economy, why does it think it has to look outside of our province? A case in point involved the Workers' Compensation Board review recently done by an Ontario bean counter; this despite the fact that the Provincial Auditor was fully qualified to do the review himself. It seems ludicrous that we are farming out work to people in other provinces when there are so many Saskatchewan people looking for jobs here.

(1630)

Speaking of auditing, this amendment also proposes changes to the auditing system of the Saskatchewan Archives Board. Currently the board prepares and submits a financial statement to the minister under The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991, showing the business of the board for the preceding fiscal year.

With this amendment, the Lieutenant Governor would appoint an auditor to audit the records, accounts, and financial statements of the board annually. As well the Lieutenant Governor may request an audit at any time. I approve this change because it makes the board more accountable to the people of Saskatchewan. I also approve the proposed changes to restrictions on access. Currently the board has agreements with private donors placing restrictions on access that are binding to everyone.

In the amendment, no one can have access to restricted material

unless they have the permission of the donor and the Provincial Archivist. I think this is an essential clause. I know if I was to donate a family document, I would want to take any steps necessary to ensure the documents were protected from harm. When people donate to the provincial archives, they do so because they want to make a valuable contribution for many years to come.

Besides my concern about allowing services to go outside the province, I also have a concern about the two representatives from the public service. Currently the Provincial Archivist is secretary. What I want to know is who would the other one be and what would be his or her expert experience? As long as these concerns and any others that arise in the next while are addressed, I would approve The Archives Amendment Act be passed on to the Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

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

Bill No. 27

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 27 — An Act respecting Architects** be now read a second time.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Act respecting Architects is once again an Act that differentiates and distinguishes some very necessary definitions of the role of architects. There is some question within this profession about the commonality between architects and engineers. And although some of these issues may be discussed in the Committee of the Whole, I'd just like to make some comments with respect to this particular Act.

The self-governing body of the architect association is somewhat similar to what the legal profession has in place. And again it seems that each profession needs a regulatory body to make sure that there is discipline, conduct, and once again, responsibility and deterrence against performing actions that are not acceptable or are against the law.

This legislation, and I will suggest that it clearly spells out procedures that the association must now follow in investigating conduct of its members. And again it's unfortunate that in this day and age we seem to need more and more regulations and rules governing people in a profession that should be able to govern themselves and we should not need to threaten them with punishment or penalties in the event they do not perform their duties in a responsible fashion.

This legislation establishes a professional conduct committee which will in fact be appointed by the council. The discipline committee is in place to decide punishment for members found to be in misconduct by the conduct committee, and this again lends itself to ensuring that there is no professional incompetence and/or professional misconduct.

The new Act much more precisely sets out when and why this

association passes its by-laws in order to govern its members. The definition of the term architecture has been changed in this new Act and the terms architect and registered architect have been removed. All now are referred to as member in this new Act.

One again the concerns that have been brought to our attention, Mr. Speaker, is that in fact graduates of engineering schools in Saskatchewan have been receiving the architects' designation for years because there is no school of architecture here. And those are some of the concerns that we will be prepared to address in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 8

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 8 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just looking quickly at the Bill, I'm still not sure if this in fact is where the business people of this province want to be heading — in a direction in fact where the government is still in a position to borrow extreme amounts of money, I guess to try and inject themselves into Saskatchewan business.

And the concern I have, Mr. Speaker, comes back to when the government opposite, being the ones to first bring in the SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) industrial parks . . . And you know, when you drive around Saskatchewan and you go into some of the communities such as Shaunavon where in fact there was an industrial park set up under . . . I think the sign is still there, Mr. Speaker, a great big SEDCO sign. And in all the years that I've lived in Shaunavon, that park has been there, holding up a lot of land I guess that used to be agriculture land. Now all I see is lots that are empty. I think there is one building out in that huge industrial park.

So I'm not sure if in fact this is where the government wants to go, is to keep spending hundreds of millions of dollars, because that's what I see in the Bill itself, Mr. Speaker. The ability to borrow or spend hundreds of millions of dollars — if that in fact is what the people of this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well it's right in the Bill.

I notice that the members across would like to heckle about it, but it's in the Bill. It states a hundred million dollar figure. In fact this figure used to . . . my knowledge of it, they had the ability to have 100 million, and now we're talking about an additional 100 million for investments and the first 100 million to promote industrial parks. Of course we're going to have a lot more concern about this, and we'll be dealing with it in committee.

But if you really take a look at these SEDCO parks sitting there empty, I would have hoped that the government of the day, when they brought in the SEDCO parks, would have learned a

lesson. It appears not.

Now the concern, I think, would be not so much on the parks side for me as on the dollar side. This is a government that has the ability, Mr. Speaker, to go and borrow hundreds of millions of dollars to do what they think is probably best, at least from their perspective, best for business or best for the communities in Saskatchewan. But you know if you were to ask the people, Mr. Speaker . . . We'll use the town of Shaunavon because familiar with it. And I know you won't ask the people in Shaunavon. But, Mr. Speaker, if you did, I think what you would find is that they would say well, you know that SEDCO sign, it's about time we tore it down. We just don't see the need for it any longer.

The government, because of their high taxation policies, their labour policies, the policies that they have regarding Crown tendering, you know, the fact that the PST (provincial sales tax) is killing jobs and killing businesses all along the south and the side of this province, Mr. Speaker, unless they can actually stand up and give me a few names of businesses that are moving out in that SEDCO industrial park, I have concerns about them throwing more money into more parks. Because if you were to ask, as I said before, what's needed in a place like Shaunavon, why don't you use a few million dollars and take care of the sick and the elderly?

You know we've got a nursing home in the community of Shaunavon that in fact I don't know if it's condemned, but it's very close. It's I think the only nursing home in Saskatchewan where you still have four beds to one room. That's what the people are living out there. I don't see anybody needing an industrial park; what they need is a nursing home.

And the day that the Premier there can stand up and say, you know, we're going to reprioritize what we're doing as a government, and in fact the people want nursing homes, then they should have nursing homes . . . if they don't want SEDCO parks or SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) or whatever they want to call themselves today, then they shouldn't have.

Put the question to the people. You know, raise these kind of issues before you go into election, Mr. Premier. Don't bring the bills out later and give the people no ability to influence what you're doing.

The first hundred million of course went into — what was it, Innovation Place? Well I don't know . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . investments . . .

An Hon. Member: — Where?

Mr. McPherson: — In Saskatoon. I mean I don't think this is question period but I sure don't mind entertaining some questions if you want to put them up. But you have to ask better questions than what you're throwing at me right now.

Okay, Saskatoon where both of you are from — you're both from Saskatoon. Okay, well there's a hundred million dollars that we're talking. And the first amounts of money are going

into Innovation Place in Saskatoon.

Well do you know how many people . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me? Listen, I'll tell you what's needed in Saskatoon because you're obviously not in touch with the people out in your own riding. Do you know how many calls I get from people who are not sure if they're going to have a place for their mother and father in their senior years to live? It still comes down to governments having priorities.

If your priority is to forget the sick and the elderly and somehow let on you're the driving force behind biotechnology . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I'm sorry but that's just not on. People aren't buying that at all. You may sit there and think it's real funny that in fact you've got an Economic Development minister that will throw Saskatchewan taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars into Ontario companies to invest in Cuba or whatever he's going to . . . he made a trip to Nicaragua. I expect that we'll see an announcement soon where we're doing something there also.

I don't know; we've got to get that guy to stay home for once and quit skiing around the world because he's just costing us money. And yet I still see senior people, senior people, Mr. Speaker, that don't have places to live.

I don't want us to get back to the day, I don't want us, Mr. Speaker, to get back to the day when in fact people are going to be housed, you know . . . build a small room off the side of the furnace room and rent it out to a senior. If this is where you're going, and obviously it is . . . And the member from Moose Jaw, the minister from Moose Jaw — I'll clarify that — I mean this is where your Bills and where your direction was going a year ago.

If you've got a hundred million dollars, don't go out and tell the people in health care fields that we can't afford, we can't afford to have a hospital in Coronach or Climax or Mankota, but you have a hundred million dollars to make an investment and have there sitting with empty SEDCO parks . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you guys did build those . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well sure. Well talk to the member from Elphinstone. That's where it's from.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now we seem to have diverted from the agenda item here on both sides of the House. And I want to remind all members it's appropriate to direct debate through the Speaker. It's also protocol to allow the member to make his points and to address the item before us. I'm sure all members will want to cooperate to ensure this continues in an orderly kind of way.

(1645)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know how difficult they can be.

Mr. Speaker, and I'll be honest with you. The only reason I was entertaining questions is because, you know, they will at least answer a few of those because they don't in question period. And yes, I'll move along.

But, you know, the member from Elphinstone, the Minister of Economic Development, if you want to ask about who brought the SEDCO park to Shaunavon . . . Well in fact I think he's raising his hand now.

There, I think, Mr. Speaker, is where the problem is. It's because if we've got this kind of money, if in fact the government can even access this kind of money . . . You recall, as I do, it was only a few years ago when the Premier was going around the province saying, you know, we are on the verge of bankruptcy; I think that this province may go down. I remember hearing him say that a lot.

Now all of a sudden we've got a couple hundred million dollars to build more SEDCO, SOCO, whatever they want to call them, parks. I'm saying, really what you want to do, what you want to do is just do what people want of government — that is to take care of their sick, their elderly, the roads. Do some of the very basic things . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member from Rosetown keeps wanting to heckle here. And he is a good point to what I'm trying to get at here, Mr. Speaker. Here's a guy that wanted to gravel highways — 90 miles of highways in my constituency — and of course I took offence to that.

Do the basic things. We're not saying do them well, but just start them and we'll fix them up later — next term. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendments to The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act before the Assembly at this time is building on two premisses. The first one being that this relatively new Crown corporation is a valuable use of taxpayers' dollars in the first place, and more value could be added by freeing up more money because none of the original \$100 million would then have to be used for capitalization.

The second premiss is that it takes government involvement to encourage research and development in this province. I do not agree. Firstly, let me point out that the Act gives the minister retroactive approval to spend taxpayers' funding on Innovation Place, sort of an, oops, I better fix up the paperwork problem since I've already bought it.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed provide SOCO with \$100 million to be involved in the business of carrying on business or proposing to conduct business in this province.

The minister told this Assembly that SOCO was one of the ways the government could work with private sectors to make the dreams in the *Partnership For Growth* proposal come true.

Far be it from me, Mr. Speaker, to rain on the minister's parade, but SOCO is not a shining star in this government's helmet. SOCO has been in operation since mid-1994 and from the latest figures I've been able to attain, there's been over 1,100 inquiries to the corporation.

That sounds great. But the number of applications approved as

of December 1995 was only 11 — 11 out of 1,100 inquiries. At least one of them was an Ontario firm.

Now that must mean, Mr. Speaker, that either a lot of Saskatchewan companies are viewed as being very bad business risks by this government, which is understandable with the maze of overwhelming regulations that this government has provided. Maybe they're asking for not enough money.

Or maybe the dozens of Saskatchewan companies who applied just can't provide a good enough business plan. The minister bragged that 29 staff accomplished all this work — 11 applications approved with a mere \$2 million budget.

Using the minister's figures, that means it cost \$3 million of taxpayers' dollars, over 18 months to lend out \$11.4 million to 11 firms. That's \$3 million of taxpayers' dollars in 18 months.

In the minister's own words, this \$11.4 million created 266 full and part-time jobs. Take one step further, that means that the minister was willing to risk Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars to the tune of \$44,000 a job. I think the bragging should end, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to do a comparison. Just last week, we received notification of the activities of PARD (Partnership Agreement on Rural Development), the joint federal-provincial partnership agreement for the assistance to rural projects in Saskatchewan. I know all of the members present got a copy of that. There were 239 projects approved with funding totalling \$5.3 million. These were firms that were receiving funding in rural Saskatchewan. That money was used to start individual ventures, undertake applied research and development, increase product lines and start new businesses. All of these members received a list, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure many of the members across know of people who received support for their initiatives.

If each one of these projects resulted in only one job, Mr. Speaker — and I know lots of these projects personally, hey created more than one job — it would mean that the cost was around \$20,000 a job. That's less than half of the cost of the SOCO jobs.

The Minister for Economic Development, as well as the Minister for Sask Water, applauded the program with statements like, and I quote:

Without this assistance, many of these new ventures or expansions to existing businesses would remain merely dreams.

I know that funding from SOCO is not a grant; I also know the determination required by people to get funding from SOCO, and I salute their perseverance. There's a lot of red tape involved.

SOCO's history has not been long enough to give it a track record, and as the minister so eloquently pointed out the other day in question period when he was speaking about the growth

fund, there cannot be success on every investment. Does that mean some of these 11 projects could be in jeopardy and risking some more of our taxpayers' dollars? This government still seems to believe that they have to put more eggs in bigger baskets and that's the answer to all the questions. SOCO is an example of very few applicants being approved and big dollars per investment.

Mr. Minister said and I quote:

If we're going to spend money, we'll spend it on small entrepreneurs, small companies, small businesses, and that's where you're going to get your lion's share of the jobs today and in the future.

This government just can't seem to keep a focus.

Discussions I had with the minister myself involving the small-business loans in communities led me to believe that his government was determined to work with small businesses and programs like this one where the majority of jobs are created. Statistics do show that over 75 per cent of jobs that are created in Saskatchewan are in businesses with less than five employees. Why does this government have the grim determination to look only at big businesses? If there are so few great ventures in this province, as it is obvious from SOCO's record, then why doesn't the government save the taxpayers money and leave the business of lending money just to banks?

The second part of the grandiose scheme for SOCO is to provide a further \$100 million for developing and operations of research and development parks. As a manufacturer, I know the importance of applied research and development to industry, and I applaud companies that undertake this work.

Canada has the dubious distinction of spending 1.3 per cent of its GDP (gross domestic product) on research and development. This is less than one-half of what other industrialized nations spend. The cost of doing nothing is not nothing; it leads to stagnation.

The biotech industries that call Innovation Place home have established a name worldwide for their research, specifically in the field of agricultural biotechnology. They are on the leading edge of change, in fact change for the better, as we head into the next millennium, and they are delighted with their home in Innovation Place in Saskatoon.

There are two types of research and development. The first, that being pure research of science, and it is usually not undertaken by private firms. The second type, applied R&D (research and development), is usually undertaken by businesses when research and development is required to apply new technology for economic gain.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is how much of these costs should be borne by the average taxpayer? Shouldn't these costs be paid for by the businesses themselves if it is going to create economic development for them?

Pure scientific research is usually undertaken in a lab in a

university or labs designed specifically for research.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister's plan? Is it to undertake research and then sell it to private companies? If the private companies are doing the work, would it not make more sense that if the economic environment was correct for business in this province, and given the world-class reputation of our universities, that these companies would locate in Saskatchewan anyway? If the business environment was correct; if they didn't have to work through yards of red tape and have to work with PST and the labour standards and all the problems that are facing businesses in this province, they would come anyway. We don't have to throw money to them.

Maybe this government cannot imagine a firm locating here without a bribe, and they're probably right. With the unfavourable atmosphere for business in this province, they usually do need to extend a carrot to business.

The applied research and development undertaken by hundreds of manufacturing firms in this province is equally important to the economy of this province. It's just as important as the research that's carried on in Innovation Place. The Schulte Industries, the Del-Airs, and the Bourgaults of this province carry out R&D — that's research and development — as part of their operations to remain viable in their own specific marketplace. It requires constant upgrading of technology to be leaders in a global market. And manufacturing firms that realize that in order to stay financially viable nowadays, they have to conclude export marketing as part of their plans.

The research and development carried out by firms inside their own businesses or contracted out, is outside of Innovation Place. This research is very essential to the growth of this province.

Mr. Speaker, is the establishment of a research and development park in Saskatoon, and perhaps one in Regina, just another example of the government choosing which segments of business they should be helping? Is it not just a very short-sighted viewpoint of government, again picking which company they decide they should help? Which company is the winner of government favours today? Another teacher's pet. Government research and development parks are just that — a gathering of a few who have found favour.

When I was reading the proposed Act, in one point talked about research and industrial parks and in other places they said, park. I heard the word Regina come up very often and. I assure you, like my colleague mentioned, there are SEDCO graveyards all over this province. We don't need them. We need to have actual research and development carried on in this province to create jobs.

There's nothing wrong with these companies that are actually in Innovation Place, but what about the thousands of people who are not able to pick up their businesses and move to these parks. The information exchange in the biotech industries at Innovation Place is greatly increased by being in close proximity with others sharing similar problems. But the biotech industry should not be duplicated in Regina or wherever else

this government chooses as a site.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if the government is going to encourage different types of research and development in different locations, the people of this province are not privy to that information yet. What are we talking about when we talk about information, about research and development? Is it going to be information parks? Is it going to be transportation parks? What kind of research and development is the government actually talking about?

Maybe the minister is considering an agricultural park in Humboldt beside PAMI (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute). That would make sense if you decided you were going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, why is the government deciding? That's not their job. The people of Saskatchewan have to decide where they want to have their businesses. When will the government leave these questions to the people with the spirit and the ability to really make the difference. Let industry decide. Let industry create . . . The government has to create the environment with our taxpayers' dollars that would let all kinds of businesses expand their technology.

This government talks about choices, Mr. Speaker, and there are lots of choices and they have to decide how to spend our very hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. We're talking about \$200 million. This is the same amount of money that we could keep hospitals open with. We wouldn't have to change our schooling system. We wouldn't have to increase power rates. We wouldn't have to do lots of things.

The minister could consider spending this \$200 million on tax incentives partnering with the federal research and development grant. That would give businesses a percentage of their completed research back in forms of tax credits. And you just ask, Mr. Speaker — there are a lot of companies that rely on the federal tax dollars back to allow them to have more research done in following years. It could even be monitored by the province's very prestigious and very well recognized Research Council in Saskatoon.

I do believe that governments do have a role in research and development. They have a role in encouraging businesses and industry to locate in this province. Then these industries do not have to be spoon fed. Isn't it the job of government, especially a socialist government, not to have to pick and choose favourites? Isn't everyone an equal?

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Act needs a lot of careful consideration especially by the government who is caught up in the excitement of dealing with a few companies in specialized, exciting areas. The mundane job . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. The Speaker has risen on an order of the day and in order to proceed there would have to be leave to stop the clock. Is there leave granted?

Leave not granted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Osika | 377 |
| Bjornerud | 377 |
| Julé | 377 |
| Krawetz | 377 |
| Gantefoer | 377 |
| Draude | 377 |
| McLane | 377 |
| Aldridge | 377 |
| Belanger | 377 |
| McPherson | 378 |
| Heppner | 378 |

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Clerk | 378 |
|-------------|-----|

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Draude | 378 |
|--------------|-----|

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Crofford | 378 |
| Julé | 378 |
| Teichrob | 378, 380 |
| McPherson | 379 |
| Shillington | 379 |
| Heppner | 380 |
| Krawetz | 380 |
| Hagel | 380 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Francophone Week in Saskatchewan

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Kasperski | 380 |
| Julé | 381 |

Sister Eliza of Mary

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Langford | 381 |
|----------------|-----|

St. Joseph's School Grand Opening

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Koenker | 381 |
|---------------|-----|

Education Week Tribute to NORTEP and SIFC

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Goulet | 381 |
|--------------|-----|

Rural Service Branches

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Aldridge | 382 |
|----------------|-----|

National Newspaper Awards

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Van Mulligen | 382 |
|--------------------|-----|

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Administration

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| McPherson | 382 |
| Cline | 382 |

Service Districts Act

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Heppner | 384 |
| Teichrob | 384 |

New Democratic Party Fund-raiser

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| D'Autremont | 385 |
| Shillington | 385 |

Providence Place Geriatric Unit

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Aldridge | 385 |
| Cline | 385 |

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 36 — An Act to amend or repeal Miscellaneous Statutes concerning Municipal Government

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Teichrob | 387 |
|----------------|-----|

Bill No. 37 — An Act to amend The Water Corporation Act

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Anguish | 387 |
|---------------|-----|

Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Anguish | 387 |
|---------------|-----|

Bill No. 39 — An Act to Promote, Develop and Sustain Irrigation

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Anguish | 387 |
|---------------|-----|

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Bill No. 40 - An Act respecting Pharmacists and Pharmacies | |
| Cline | 387 |
| Bill No. 41 — An Act to amend The Mental Health Services Act | |
| Cline | 387 |
| ORDERS OF THE DAY | |
| STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER | |
| Ruling on a Written Question | |
| Speaker | 388 |
| WRITTEN QUESTIONS | |
| Shillington | 388 |
| GOVERNMENT ORDERS | |
| SECOND READINGS | |
| Bill No. 12 — An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act and to enact consequential amendments | |
| Nilson | 388 |
| McPherson | 389 |
| Bill No. 28 — An Act to provide for the Establishment, Development and Maintenance of Public Libraries | |
| Teichrob | 389 |
| Bjornerud | 390 |
| Bill No. 29 — An Act to enable Co-operation among all Types of Autonomous Libraries for the Provision of Library Services | |
| Teichrob | 390 |
| Bjornerud | 390 |
| Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Hotel Keepers Act | |
| Nilson | 391 |
| Osika | 391 |
| Bill No. 33 — An Act respecting Service Districts and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts | |
| Teichrob | 391 |
| Toth | 392 |
| Bill No. 34 — An Act to amend The Electrical Inspection Act, 1993 | |
| Anguish | 393 |
| Gantefoer | 393 |
| ADJOURNED DEBATES | |
| SECOND READINGS | |
| Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Income Plan Act | |
| Julé | 394 |
| Toth | 395 |
| Pringle | 395 |
| Koenker | 400 |
| D'Autremont | 403 |
| Bill No. 16 — An Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act | |
| McLane | 403 |
| D'Autremont | 403 |
| Bill No. 23 — An Act to amend The Archives Act | |
| Julé | 404 |
| Bill No. 27 — An Act respecting Architects | |
| Osika | 405 |
| Bill No. 8 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act | |
| McPherson | 405 |
| Draude | 407 |