

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of a great many concerned citizens of Saskatchewan regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

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

And the names on this petition are from Oxbow, Regina, Grenfell, Broadview, Weyburn, and Stoughton — virtually all the small communities in southern Saskatchewan as well as Regina itself, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today 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.

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from such places as Grayson, Regina, Stockholm, Waldron, and numerous other southern Saskatchewan centres.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of hundreds of names 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 these petitions are from Esterhazy, Preeceville, Weyburn, Regina, Canora, and many more places. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions of names of people 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 this petition are from Carlyle. They're from Moose Jaw, from Manor, from Regina, and all over southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions from . . . names from many, many people from eastern

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 petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed from the residents of the Melville-Grayson area in eastern Saskatchewan.

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.

And the people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina and Moose Jaw.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again I rise today to present further 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 Balcarres. There's even one from Calgary here.

They're all from throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions on behalf of the committee and those that are trying to save 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, most of the people that have signed these petitions today are from the Viceroy area, but many from Regina, and in fact the constituencies of Regina Albert South and Elphinstone in particular.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Protect the Public from Convicted Pedophiles, and short title, The Public Protection from Pedophiles Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Municipal Government regarding budget day: (1) what managers from the Municipal Government department have been instructed to fan out in rural areas on budget day or shortly after; (2) to what locations are these employee/managers being sent; (3) what is the purpose behind the minister asking these individuals to fan out to rural areas?

I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — I give notice that on day no. 23 I'll ask the government the following question:

(1) What is the average increases in percentage terms of northern Saskatchewan power bills as of January 1, 1996 rate hike; (2) has there been any consultation with business and consumer groups in the North with regards to the subsequent impact of these power hikes on the already high power bills; (3) are there any public awareness plans in place now to assist homeowners and other SaskPower customers in ways of reducing excessive power use in the North; (4) what is SaskPower doing to address the constant power failures that occur in northern Saskatchewan; (5) in terms of the long distance that the power must travel to bring services to the people of the North, what percentage of power losses incurred over these long distances; and finally, (6) why do the people of the North seem to pay a higher power rate from the rest of Saskatchewan when they receive a lower quality and quantity of service?

Thank you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Balanced Budget Act — short title, The Balanced Budget Amendment Act, 1996.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 26 grades 5 and 6 students in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Alice LaCroix, and chaperon, Vince LaCroix. And I ask all members to join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and all members of the legislature a number of

special guests here today to witness very important ceremonies here this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, joining us today are — and I would ask them to stand and be recognized — Mr. Donna Berard of Kindersley; Cindy and Chuck Annabell of Kindersley; Lee Ann and Jeff Brady of Eatonia; Wilf and Kay Berard of Kenosee; Art and Glenda Berard of Lumsden.

I would ask all members of the legislature to welcome these special guests this afternoon for the ceremonies.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I also want to introduce some very special guests, and I'll ask them to stand as I introduce them.

First of all the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Mr. Max Morin, with his wife Christine; also his three sisters: Sandra, Patsy, and Margaret; his brother-in-law, Stuart Koochicum; his niece Jolene. And as well we have a number of people from the Metis nation here that are visiting us this afternoon with the president, Jim Durocher: Allen Morin, Don Favel, Michelle Harding, Kim Sinclair, and Vanessa Gardiner as well.

And I would ask the Assembly to please welcome these guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and through you to the members a grade 5 and 6 class from St. Augustine School in the constituency of Regina Victoria. They are seated in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Suzanne Louttit, and by the teacher associate, Linda Scott.

I am pleased that they could be here today. St. Augustine School has a very strong volunteer base in our community, and I would ask the members to join me to make them feel especially welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Agriculture Week

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize March 24 to 30 as Agriculture Week in Saskatchewan. I invite all citizens of Saskatchewan to join with me in the recognition of the agriculture and food industry as a foundation for Saskatchewan's economy.

The Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association initiated this special week-long promotion of the industry a number of years ago in recognition of agriculture's importance and its contribution to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this year Agriculture Week's theme salutes agriculture, Saskatchewan's economic foundation. Our

foundation is strong because of our progressive livestock and crop production, diversification, new and changing markets, agricultural biotechnology, value added crop processing, and the most advanced dry land farming technology in the world.

Many companies in the growth area of agri-food are based in rural Saskatchewan and contributing to employment and the economy. There are almost 300 companies now involved in the food processing industry. Farmers, agri-food businesses, and all Saskatchewan people continue to turn challenges into opportunities, responding to changing market conditions and contributing to the provincial economy.

Saskatchewan farmers have lead the agricultural field for generations because of their ingenuity, visionary outlook, and hard work. And I might add, they still lead the way. As I stand in my place, I am proud to say I am a farmer and part of the great Saskatchewan tradition. I invite everyone to join me in saying a warm and sincere thank you to our farmers. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to recognize the distinguished group in our province this week with Agriculture Week.

Right now thousands of farmers, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan are biding their time until mother nature can cooperate so that we can roll onto the fields and begin spring seeding.

When farmers first started breaking Saskatchewan's land, the forces of nature were their main concern. The events of the past year, including the massive flooding, series of wind storms and tornadoes, bertha armyworms, wheat midge, and early frost, to name a few, show us that nature's forces are still a grave concern.

But Saskatchewan farmers also cope with layers of government bureaucracy and its meddling in programs and operations. Now more than ever, many of them are trying to decide if they can continue to survive in the agriculture industry. While Saskatchewan's economy is slowly becoming more diverse, agriculture is still our province's economic foundation.

This is a critical time for Saskatchewan farmers. Agriculture technology is rapidly advancing, and today's farmers are trying to absorb the vast knowledge regarding world grain and livestock markets. They are the most innovative group of people in this province, constantly looking for more efficient farming methods.

And I would like to salute, Mr. Speaker, all Saskatchewan farmers for the determination, endurance, and pioneering spirit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus, each of which is involved in agriculture, I'm pleased to acknowledge agriculture

this week in Saskatchewan. The theme of Agriculture Week this year is, agriculture: Saskatchewan's economic foundation.

This is a vital and important message that the members of this Assembly and the members of the public must always keep in mind. The importance of agriculture to this province does not end at the farm gate or at the elevator. Whether you live in the country, in town, or in the city, the agriculture industry touches your life in more ways than you can know. Thousands of people in this province draw paycheques that would never exist if it weren't for the profound economic clout of the farming sector. People in smaller centres know this instinctively. Businesses in small towns live or die by the health of the local agriculture economy.

In the city, it's harder to see the direct effects on the daily life, but they are there, and they are just as significant. All too often, it is easy for the urban-based media and politicians to forget this. It is easy for them to think that Saskatchewan life begins and ends at the city limits of Regina or Saskatoon. For this reason, we do not always pay enough attention to critical rural issues: the elimination of the Crow, the demise of GRIP (gross revenue insurance program), and the claw-back of GRIP payments, the closure of Crop Insurance office. And it's easy for some people in the city to pretend that these issues affect someone else, but they affect us all right in the pocketbook. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the start of Provincial Impaired Driving Awareness Week in Saskatchewan. As you will know all too well, Mr. Speaker, our province has a much higher rate of impaired driving than the national average.

In 1995 alone, Mr. Speaker, 57 people were killed and nearly a thousand injured in alcohol-related car accidents. Our government has now taken steps to counter these statistics with the introduction of new legislation aimed specifically at impaired drivers.

The legislation calls for a lower blood alcohol content and more severe penalties for drinking drivers. We believe this will reduce the tragic number of preventable deaths and injuries in Saskatchewan caused by alcohol related collisions. As we know from public consultations and the work of the all-party select committee on driving safety, of which you were the chair, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will not tolerate impaired driving, and nor will our government.

I urge everyone to keep in mind the special significance of this week and drive with care. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Condolences

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask this

Assembly to join with me in expressing the sincere condolences to a former member of this Assembly and his family.

On Thursday, March 21, Mrs. Betty Hodgins passed away suddenly, following a lengthy depressive illness. She will be sadly missed by her loving husband Bill and her son Grant, who was a member of this Legislative Assembly. As this Assembly may be aware, the Hodgins family has also suffered an earlier loss of Grant's brother Russell as well as his sister Beverly.

The member from Melfort-Tisdale is in attendance at the funeral today and will carry the condolences on behalf of this entire Assembly. I ask this Assembly to join with me to express our sincere condolences to the Hodgins family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Impaired Driving Awareness Week

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to reiterate from our caucus that we would like to acknowledge our condolences to the Hodgins family as well.

But I would like to also join with the member opposite on behalf of our caucus and acknowledging the work of SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) members and different groups across this province regarding Impaired Driving Awareness Week.

Every year our province has witnessed countless deaths and injuries due to impaired driving. This waste of precious human life is tragic, deplorable and just downright stupid. For many years a wide variety of groups have worked to educate the public on this issue: SADD, Students Against Drunk Driving; MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving; and SCARED, Saskatchewan Citizens Advocating Responsible Educated Drivers . . . have done tremendous work in this regard. They and other groups like them deserve society's profound thanks. Yet in spite of all this effort, Saskatchewan still has a shameful distinction of having among the highest drunk driving rates in Canada.

Clearly this is an area where we, as legislators, can do much better. In acknowledging Impaired Driving Week, I think that the members of this Assembly must also renew our commitment and our responsibility to fighting this senseless crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Child and Family Service Agency Agreement

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday, the Minister of Social Services and the Saskatoon Tribal Council signed a highly significant agreement. This agreement will promote the development of an Indian child and family service agency, an agency that will assume responsibilities for the delivery of child and family services to the first nations people. This is the 12th such agreement signed in our province.

The first nations of the Saskatoon Tribal Council include two in my constituency, Mistawasis and Muskeg Lake. Also part of the agreement are Muscoday, Kinistin, One Arrow, Yellowquill, and Whitecap Dakota.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the best way to encourage family harmony and child protection is to promote the culture and traditions of the people involved. People with a strong heritage are likely to have strong families. It is important that we as a government work with the first nations to help facilitate first nation's responsibility for their children and families. This agreement will do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Tribal Chief Joe Quewezance and all members of the Saskatoon Tribal Council for their work in establishing this family service agency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oscar Night

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight should be another exciting night in Saskatchewan. We can either go outside and look at the comet in our northern skies, or we can stay inside and watch Oscar night in Hollywood.

There are five excellent films that are nominated for best picture. But in the light of recent events, I think we all know which one the Premier is pulling for. *Babe* is a heart-warming story of a talking pig — a determined little pig who quickly learns his way around the trough.

Mr. Speaker, in honour of the recent MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) pay hike, I would like to present the Premier and his caucus with a copy of *Babe* the talking pig movie. I'm sure you'll find it inspirational viewing at your next caucus meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight many of my constituents and thousands of other people across this province will be gripped to their television sets. They will be joining almost a billion people worldwide in watching Hollywood hand out the Oscars. The movies, Mr. Speaker, have become a dominant art form in this century and will undoubtedly continue to do so for years to come.

It's a strange coincidence that while it's Oscar week around the world, it's budget week here in Saskatchewan. Tonight we'll find out who the winners and losers will be. Will *Sense and Sensibility* beat out *Braveheart* and *The Postman* for best picture? Or will the movie about a little pig called *Babe* be a surprise winner?

Mr. Speaker, while my constituents watch anxiously to hear what's in the envelope, so too do they await what's in the provincial budget. They wonder whether the postman will bring more bills to more unsuspecting people like farmers. They wonder whether sense and sensibility will win out in the minds

of the members opposite when it comes to cutting our health and education. They wonder whether this government will show a brave heart and stop blaming Ottawa for all their problems. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, they're wondering whether any appointees will continue to be winners at the trough.

In closing, be it the Oscars or a Meryl Streep-like performance on budget day, we all will be wondering what comes after "the envelope, please." We'll all want to know who wins or loses. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

High-risk Offender Identification

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Last week members in this House asked what the government was prepared to do to calm fears of Saskatchewan residents regarding the release of dangerous offenders into their neighbourhoods — namely, people want to be warned when this happens.

All we got out of the minister was a promise to perhaps study the matter with perhaps some draft proposals in three months. The Saskatoon police attempted to warn residents there of just such an offender. However, the law only allows them to go so far.

While everyone is innocent until proven guilty in our society, given what allegedly occurred with this offender in Saskatoon over the weekend, will the minister give his commitment today to take some immediate action in this regard so our citizens, our children, can feel safe again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question. As the hon. member knows, the matter is before the courts and I cannot comment about that. What I think it does do, though, is brings out what the real issue here is, and the issue is that when offenders, dangerous offenders have served their full term then there is no longer any sort of control that we can place on them because they become free members of society.

In February, we had planned a meeting of the ministers of Justice with the federal Minister of Justice, Mr. Allan Rock, to discuss this issue because the issue is a federal issue, federal Liberal caucus issue relating to amendments to the Criminal Code. And there are some suggestions that we strongly support, as the Government of Saskatchewan, that deal with providing some kinds of control for these high-risk offenders as they have fulfilled their full term and are out on the streets, and we are working towards that to the next meeting which will be in May because it was delayed by the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, that alarms me somewhat because

I do not understand anything that cannot allow us to protect our young people.

Mr. Speaker, other jurisdictions in and out of Canada are far ahead on this issue. At some point, the rights of the community as a whole have to outweigh the rights of violent criminals.

Mr. Speaker, in the March 16 issue of *The Billings Gazette*, out of Billings, Montana, there appears an item released by the Montana Department of Correction listing the name, vital statistics, and pictures of a sex offender who had been released into the public. Manitoba is also taking very clear action in this area.

Will the minister commit to following a similar course of action in Saskatchewan when that's what many people clearly state they want? This is for the protection of our young people, similar to our neighbouring jurisdictions. And I would like to hand a copy of this newspaper article to all the cabinet ministers.

Will the minister commit to taking some action earlier than three months?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the next question. I think the member has not understood that the incident that he is referring to today does not involve a young person. It's an adult person. So I think that should be clarified. Also, the whole situation relating to the release of information — there are no rules right now that prevent the police from releasing this information.

The bigger issue is the liability question about when the police do release the information. And I think it's important that we all recognize that this is an extremely serious issue that involves all of the members of this legislature, people in the police community, people in our prosecution . . . our Justice department. We all have to grapple with this and come up with a solution that works appropriately.

It's entirely inappropriate to use this forum and the types of sort of media hype that the members opposite seem to want to do to grapple with this difficult question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — I thank the minister for his answer, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from the public; they are calling and writing asking that we pressure the minister to expedite this matter and take some concrete action.

Mr. Minister, earlier I gave notice of a Bill respecting public protection from pedophiles. Can we have your commitment, can we have the minister's commitment, Mr. Speaker, to support this Bill or table a government Bill to protect our young people in this province? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the third question. I think the answer to my first question answers what he's just asked now. This is a matter for the federal government in amendments to the Criminal Code to deal with and we are going to be working with them.

I suggest that if the hon. member and his caucus have ideas that we can use, I will accept them and take them with me when I go and meet with the Justice minister in May, for sure, and possibly earlier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wildlife Damage Compensation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Sask Environment and Resource Management.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday evening I attended a meeting in Melville with many farmers from across Saskatchewan. All of them wanted the minister to explain why the government will not compensate them for damage done to their crops by deer. While the minister did offer some possible options for next year, many of these farmers say they need help now or they will not be able to seed a crop this spring.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of this meeting, the minister left everyone in attendance with the impression that he would take these concerns back to cabinet and request appropriate funding. Can the minister tell us whether the cabinet has agreed to a fair compensation package for these farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I was pleased to see the hon. member at the rally in Melville the other night as well. We had a good meeting, a very productive meeting, good two-way conversation, and we certainly heard exactly what the problems were. Unfortunately we do not have a pot of money which we can dish out for compensation.

And I can further say that we did offer a number of alternatives for next year, including fencing of the feed stacks, the further use of deterrent methods such as intercept feeding to keep the animals away from feed stacks, and hopefully we won't have 196,000 acres of crop out again.

But in the event that we do have that, we are looking at a long-term compensation program for future years. We're working with the wildlife federation, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), farmers, hopefully the federal government on this as well. So we are looking at a number of options. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, that's definitely not the answer that these farmers had hoped to hear, so therefore my next question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, everyone enjoys the wildlife in this province and yet only farmers with crops devastated by deer are expected to pick up the tab. Money was found for flood damage last spring just before the election, and crop damage caused by wildlife is also a disaster to these farmers.

Will the Premier find some compassion and allocate funds to compensate Saskatchewan farmers for wildlife damage?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again as I pointed out to the farmers at the meeting and also at the SARM convention, the government simply does not have a pot of several million dollars to hand out for compensation.

It's a very unfortunate situation. We've never had these circumstances in the history of farming in Saskatchewan before with so much crop being out, such a severe winter, and also relatively high population numbers. But we are working with landowners and doing everything that we possibly can to reduce the damage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High-risk Offender Identification

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Justice as well.

Mr. Minister, a week ago our caucus moved an emergency motion regarding pedophiles. That motion is all that really is necessary to deal with this very important issue. It called on your government to adopt the community notification process for released sex offenders similar to the policy used in Manitoba. You defeated that motion and continue to do nothing about this problem. It's not a federal concern; it's a concern of every parent in this province.

The worst fears of the police have been realized in Saskatoon and the parents in Saskatoon. The convicted sex offender, who Saskatoon police were concerned about, has now been arrested for sexual assault. The police did everything they could to notify the public; your department did nothing.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to make the changes to allow greater public notification about dangerous sex offenders? The real issue, Mr. Minister, needs attention now. When is the protection of the public going to start taking precedence over your protection of convicted pedophiles?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

As I previously stated, this is a difficult issue, but I would appreciate if the appropriate facts would be presented to this Assembly. The matter that was in the paper this morning does not involve pedophilia. It's a sexual assault of an adult. It's a different issue.

Now on the issue of protection of the public as it relates to the protocol from Manitoba or other procedures, we're working on this. It's a difficult issue to have it all resolved.

What I would say is that the police have the option of presenting the information the way they have. The major issue for them is their liability. And that's the kind of issue that we're discussing, because they're concerned about any possible lawsuits against them.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, that just simply isn't good enough. This sex offender has re-offended. It's not a difficult issue at all. Parents in this province want you to address it now.

Mr. Minister, on Friday you introduced legislation to allow Saskatchewan to work with other provinces in the area of film classification. I agree that protecting our children from certain movies is important, but protecting our children from child molesters is far more important.

Mr. Minister, why don't you join with Manitoba and adopt a community notification program? What's the hold-up? The police are doing everything they can to protect the public. Why don't you get behind them and address this issue now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would reiterate that this matter is a matter relating to dangerous sexual offenders, dangerous offenders of many kinds who have served their full sentence. The person who is involved as the focus of this whole situation has completed his sentence and he's out of the institution, or he was out of the institution. And what we're dealing with is amendments to the Criminal Code which have to be done by the federal government.

There are some proposals that look at 10-year supervision orders after completion of a sentence where appropriate. There are some other proposals that look at community notification through various protocols. Manitoba is the first province that has done this. Alberta's looking at it. We are looking at it very seriously and we will continue to do that. And our ultimate concern is the community, the children in our community, and we are working toward that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, no changes to the Criminal Code are necessary here. Manitoba has already adopted a policy that's working and working very well.

Mr. Minister, setting aside politics here, we know what the right thing to do here is. The member from Greystone last week spoke about the issue as well. The Liberals are on side on this issue. Now is the time for action, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, will you move to adopt that policy here this afternoon? We will give you our full support and leave to do so, and we will see that that issue is dealt with this afternoon and passed.

Mr. Minister, instead of wasting more time, will you simply introduce that motion here this afternoon and allow for that passage and allow for the parents of this province to have their children protected in this province the way they should be?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that the Manitoba protocol is one appropriate way to deal with it. As I reported last week, in the first six months of operation there were 12 cases that were presented to their committee. Only one case was given full publicity like has been done in Saskatoon.

The issue behind that protocol is whether the province takes over the liability of the police when they release information. And that is a Treasury Board issue; it's a financial issue. And we are going to deal with that, but it's a tricky issue.

What I would say is that the way the member opposite has been dealing with this, and other members opposite, has created a media hype on this issue which is totally inappropriate.

What I would like to quote from is an article from the *Canora Courier* where a Mr. Brian Zinchuk says:

There are a number of complications (dealing with pedophiles) arising from the whole affair. First, by focusing on one man, all others are forgotten. (You have to remember that). Second, one must acknowledge that the man has served his time.

So we have this complicated process. It's a balance between the rights of that individual and the community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplementary this afternoon and I wish to point out to the Minister of Justice that indeed it was the city of Saskatoon police department who raised this issue; the citizens of Saskatoon who raised this issue, not the politicians and the media of Saskatchewan, sir.

I wish to pass to you, Minister of Justice, a list of 2,031 names of concerned citizens from Saskatoon who, in the absence of your government's rational provincial protocol to deal with pedophiles released from prison, are putting forward their own solutions. And is this the way that you would like things solved in this province, Mr. Minister?

I ask you now: will you or will you not accept responsibility for what is within the power of your government to do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. My offer of March 18 still stands to that hon. member. I invited her publicly to come and discuss this matter with me and work with me. I have not heard a thing from her about this. And what I would say is once again that the way that the members opposite have gone about this increases sort of the

fear level in the community.

We are working with the police. We are working with the Justice department officials, and we are trying to deal with a very difficult situation that involves balancing the rights of the community over and against the rights of individuals. Our prime goal is the protection of the community, and that's what we are working on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Five-year Budget Plan

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government brought down a budget recently that provides the provinces with a five-year picture by which to budget funds from Ottawa. This will allow the province the certainty of knowing what level of funding it has to work with for the next several years.

Will the Finance minister now act to provide local governments, health boards, and school boards in this province with the same five-year plan to assist them in budgeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. The member will have to wait for the budget to find the answer to that specific question, but I will say two things. We will provide a four-year plan as our balanced budget legislation requires us to do, and we will focus our budget on how this province is going to deal with what Ottawa handed us.

What the members opposite, the members here, refuse to address is the reality that in the recent federal budget for '96-97, in that budget, 73 per cent of all of the cuts are to health, education, and social programs. And I would remind the member opposite when we proposed a motion in this House to express our concern about those cuts, these members did not participate with us.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will deal with the concerns of Saskatchewan people. We will address a long-term plan, and we don't need advice from people who aren't concerned about health, education, and social programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, it looks like we've had a preview of the Oscars here.

Mr. Speaker, local governments, school boards, and health boards are waiting for this government to bring down its budget before they can plan their spending for the next year and try to map out long-term strategies. Given this fact, along with the tax, utility, and fee hikes that these boards are constantly having to struggle with, a five-year plan would allow them a much greater deal of predictability and flexibility. Will the Finance minister commit to providing such a plan in this House today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Again he will have to wait for the budget to see specifics.

But I will ask the member opposite a question as well. Why do the members opposite sit in this House, representing Saskatchewan people, and act as a mouthpiece for Ottawa? Everybody in this province, except perhaps the 10 members opposite, know that we're losing, over a four-year period, about \$250 million in funding for health, education, and social programs — about a quarter of a billion dollars in loss.

The member opposite himself has had his own health board write to him, write to the federal Finance minister, saying: if you care about medicare don't allow these cuts to pass unnoticed. And yet we hear silence. We hear them saying, well what are we going to do? If they would have joined with us and expressed their concern about the magnitude of the cuts, perhaps we wouldn't be in this dilemma. I call on them to do what we're doing — speaking up for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister opposite that I was a resident of Saskatchewan last year as well, and I was privy to all of the guarantees made by the government with respect to guaranteed funding for a number of the groups that I'm up here asking for today.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain in this House today why it is that the federal government, with its massive operations and budgeting concerns, can provide a five-year financial plan for those jurisdictions that rely on federal funding, yet the Premier and the Finance minister of this province refuse to allow the same degree of comfort for those relying on provincial funding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, first of all to the member opposite, what I said to him is he has to wait for the budget. Please don't put words in my mouth.

I would say to the member opposite as well, why has he chosen to ignore the people of Saskatchewan? Why does he stand in the Saskatchewan legislature, speaking up for Ottawa? If he wants to speak up for Ottawa, he should go to Ottawa and become a member of the federal caucus. If he is in this legislature, he should represent the interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I would ask him again, why, when we had a motion in this House expressing our concern that the federal budget had 73 per cent of its cuts — 73 per cent — in health, education, and social programs, why would they not participate with us and express the concerns of the people of Saskatchewan? We will continue to speak up for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development stated in the *Partnership for Growth* document that in order to entice the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) call centre to Saskatchewan, he had to give them a \$3.4 million grant and eliminate the sales tax on the 1-800 numbers. The document stated, and I quote:

Elimination of the sales tax on 1-800 numbers was a key to attracting major telephone call centres to the province.

Mr. Speaker, does this mean the Minister of Economic Development is actually admitting there could be no economic development or job creation under the stifling taxation policies of this government without tax elimination?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite I appreciate her support for the changes that we made to the tax regime to attract call centres to Saskatchewan. I want to say as well that coming from an opening of a regional economic development authority this morning with my friend and colleague from Moosomin, I can tell you that there is a great deal of optimism in rural Saskatchewan and right across the piece.

The exports from Saskatchewan in non-traditional areas is at record levels as the member opposite well knows. The *Partnership for Renewal* has worked well. I tell you frankly that the business people and working people developed that document. We implemented it in 1992 with very excellent success. We campaigned on it 1995.

And I tell the member opposite that she should get out of the gloom and doom mentality and work with us to remodel the tax regime. And while she's at it, she might write a letter to the Prime Minister asking that the GST (goods and services tax) be eliminated as promised in the last federal election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development said in the House last Monday that I had input into the *Partnership For Growth*. He said, and I'll quote: "In fact she herself came into our office and had input into this document."

Mr. Speaker, the minister knows I did not have input into this document. I was shown the document after it was printed. If that's the minister's idea of consultation, then I can understand why so many people are upset in this province.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Economic Development admit that the *Partnership For Growth* document is nothing but a piece of NDP (New Democratic Party) propaganda intended to pay lip-service to the business community of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's hard to make a question out of that very partisan statement, but I will respond to her comments.

At this time, if the member has any input — is what I said in the House the other day — that she wants to add, now or later, I'm willing and members of our caucus are willing to meet to listen to you.

But to date, all I've heard is snivelling and whining from members of the Liberal caucus about the economy in Saskatchewan. I was at the apparel and garment annual meeting at lunch today — great optimism about the work being done to manufacture clothing and apparel in this province. We were at the regional economic development authority launch in Moosomin, a great deal of excitement.

Mr. Speaker, the only area of this province that there is depression is in the 10 members opposite. And with what they're doing to their former leader, there may be good reason why you should be ashamed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Computers for Schools Program

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the Assembly an exciting program, one that shows the way for new directions in partnerships and learning. It is my pleasure to advise the members that the provincial government and Crown corporations have partnered to donate 1,000 personal computers to Saskatchewan K to 12 schools over the next year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly commend SaskTel, SaskPower, and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) for their significant contribution to many young people in schools across the province. The computers will be distributed through the computers for schools program which is being coordinated by the volunteers with the SaskTel Pioneers.

Preparing our youth for participation in a knowledge-based society is an important government focus. The computers for schools program support this direction by giving students the tools they need to build the skills that will take them into the next century.

This approach to providing computer equipment to schools has several benefits. First and most important is the addition of computers into the school classrooms. While these computers have been replaced in government offices, they are invaluable in classrooms. Second, this program allows good computers to be reused in a positive manner instead of having them taken to the nearest salvage. Mr. Speaker, this recycling of equipment also teaches a positive environmental lesson.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and

commend the work being done by the SaskTel Pioneers. Because of their commitment to education, many students across the province will have greater access to computer technology. In Saskatchewan an advisory committee has been established to set priorities and criteria. This includes a ratio of students to computers in each school or school division to ensure a fair and equitable distribution to schools. To date, 185 applications have been received in Saskatchewan and no applications will be processed until all schools have had an opportunity to apply.

Finally, I would like to issue a challenge to other public sector organizations, private businesses, organizations, and individuals to grow the growing partnership of the computers for schools program. I urge them to donate computers to Saskatchewan school children through the SaskTel Pioneers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, firstly I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of this statement. We appreciate it.

I'm pleased that the Saskatchewan government is involved in a program to reuse government computers that may otherwise be part of our environmental problem in this province. We appreciate SaskTel's commitment to the children of our province to ensure that they are part of the global economy.

I was particularly delighted to see that rural Saskatchewan children will have an equal opportunity to apply for these computers.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus and the students of this province, we salute this program and the government and we add our voice to the request for private companies to also work with this program. We trust SaskTel will help too in the gathering and placement of the computers that could be donated by private firms.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to commend the minister, especially for the part on recycling. I think it's good to see that equipment going into the school rather than, as was mentioned, being sold for pennies on the dollar. It will get some good use there.

I think it's also good to have this happen at the time when we've just had Education Week and we were talking about the wonder in learning. I hope that the kids that get to use these will be excited about what they're learning and they're doing with them.

Two concerns I do have. I wonder how far a thousand computers go in the province. I know that's probably all that there was, but I hope that all the students get a chance at that. And with what happens in our time of technology, I would hope that these computers, even though that they may still be working well, aren't completely dated. But I like the idea of the recycling and commend you on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Student Loan Program Changes

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the Assembly of a significant change in the way student loans are financed in Saskatchewan. The Government of Saskatchewan has been closely examining the appropriate role of government. We have been more carefully defining those areas government should be involved and those that should be left to others.

In examining the Saskatchewan student loan program, we have defined government's role as determining which students are eligible for loans, how much money they need, and ensuring the money is available. That is the role the Government of Saskatchewan will continue to play in the student loan program.

What is changing is that government will leave banking to the bankers. The province and the Royal Bank have signed an agreement for the Royal Bank to finance student loans. It begins August 1 of this year.

Other lenders were approached but could not meet the government's terms — terms that include a high level of service for students at a reasonable cost to the government. Other lenders will be given an opportunity to participate at a later date.

Saskatchewan is not the first province to negotiate such a contract. Seven other provinces and the federal government have similar financing arrangements for student loans. We think that our contract is the best in the country.

We consulted students through the scholarship bursary and loan committee and they told us that service was a major concern. With that in mind we negotiated monthly disbursements providing students with a regular cash flow throughout the year. One immediate benefit to the government is a significant cost saving — a saving of \$6 million per year with no loss of jobs and no less money for students. The government will also continue to have loan forgiveness policies which are among the most generous in the country. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this contract because it increases the efficiency of government while fully maintaining an important service for students, the Saskatchewan student loans program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for releasing a copy of that document to us for a chance for me to take a quick look at it. As the minister knows, education is the most important topic for our children all across the province and we're encouraged by the fact that there is a commitment by the government to provide financial assistance to students at a time when they face the greatest need.

The largest number of calls that I have received in the last six months is from students with concerns around student loans, the availability of the finances, the service or lack of in the perception of students — and I'm very pleased to hear that the minister is looking at this as addressing that.

What my concern might be is in the area around that the interest cost that the student will have to bear now is not controlled. And I see that the bank, in this case the Royal Bank, has the availability to change the interest rate depending upon the student that they're dealing with. It's prime plus a maximum of two and a half. Does that mean then that there is flexibility and that the assets of the particular individual then come into question? So I think that has to be addressed.

When we look at the \$6 million saving, my hope is that — of course we know that the education in the province of Saskatchewan has had serious cut-backs over the last four or five years — I would hope that that \$6 million could be reallocated back into education to ensure that any student who wishes to get financial assistance, who is eligible under the government's criteria, would still be able to qualify and get that assistance to ensure that everyone has the ability to be educated in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the effort to streamline that system of loans. I think it needed to be looked at, and it's good to see it's happening. I also rather appreciate the fact of all the compliments coming to the banking system from the members opposite — an interesting point of view coming from that side but it's good to see.

A couple of concerns and they were mentioned; I'd sort of like to underline those as well. In the matter of students being able to access the loans, people, students who come from families with lots of money, probably don't need it. People at the bottom will probably get it. It's the group in the middle that tends to fall in the cracks. We've sort of said that maybe we'd need to look at a situation where the personal property of the families could be used as security to open up loans for the people and students that come from middle class situations, because they often find that situation quite difficult, and I would hope that that's being addressed as well.

I too share some of the concern with the interest rates. On that I'm not quite as supportive of the banks and their history as the member opposite. I'm a little concerned that these interest rates will get quite high.

I like the idea that — I hope it's going to happen — and that is that these loans will be repaid, and there won't be a lot of loans that get lost. This is taxpayers' money that's given to the students to give them an opportunity to become good, high-wage earners, and I'm concerned for that. You mentioned a term about loan forgiveness. I hope that doesn't mean there's too much taxpayers' money that's being forgiven on this one.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To move an adjournment motion to deal with the volunteer medals.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

House Recess

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Deputy Premier, the member for Regina Elphinstone, that by leave of the Assembly:

That this Assembly do now recess to honour the distinguished volunteer medal recipients and reconvene at the call of the Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

(1615)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 43 — An Act respecting the Development, Implementation and Operation of an Emergency 911 System and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 43 establishes The Emergency 911 System Act. This Bill lays the foundation for coordination in the development, implementation, and operation of an integrated, province-wide 911 system.

The Bill is in response to the evolving needs of municipal governments, health districts, police, and other organizations for the emergency services that are delivered to the people of this province. A comprehensive 911 system will be a positive catalyst that brings our emergency service delivery into the 21st century. The development of new partnerships and the coordination achieved through the efforts of all the emergency service providers will enhance the services that local governments provide.

The direction presented to you today for 911 is a result of the partnerships that have been created through a review of emergency and protective services. SUMA, (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) SARM, SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), emergency service organizations, SaskTel and the departments of Health, Justice, and Municipal Government started the review in 1995.

This was the beginning point for the coordination of emergency and protective services. I would like to thank the numerous emergency service providers from across the province that have provided their time and expertise to this review process.

This Bill is an important next step in the process. More work will be required on many aspects of the province-wide 911 system and on the coordination and delivery of emergency services as this initiative is implemented over several years.

I would like now to turn to the legislation and highlight some of

the details of this initiative.

The Bill before the House sets out goals for the province-wide 911 system. We will develop an enhanced service that connects a person dialling the telephone number, 911, to emergency service providers through public safety answering points. The service will automatically provide the public safety answering point with the address of the caller, even if the caller is unable to stay on the line or provide information.

We plan to accomplish this over the next five years with the cooperation of all municipal, health and other emergency service organizations in the province. More specifically, provisions to implement the system include the ability for the minister to enter into agreements with emergency service providers and to coordinate standards, protocols, mapping, addressing, call-taking, and dispatching for the implementation of the system.

A critical element of this legislation is the establishment of an advisory committee to guide the development of the province-wide system. This committee will include representation from those centres already providing enhanced 911 service, including Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, and the south-west. Their expertise will be invaluable in developing the province-wide system. We need to build on their experience.

The committee will also include representation from organizations such as SARM, SUMA, SAHO, FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), Health, Justice, and directly from emergency service providers.

To establish an effective province-wide system, we will require the participation of all municipalities, health districts, telecommunications providers, government agencies, and emergency service providers. This is not going to be an easy task, but I am certain that all organizations will come together in the cooperative spirit that Saskatchewan is noted for.

Mr. Speaker, I will now summarize the main provisions of this Bill. The definitions in the Bill are intended to be inclusive of all organizations that deliver emergency services. The 911 system means a province-wide emergency telephone service that connects a person dialling the telephone digits, 911, to emergency service providers through a public safety answering point.

The purpose of this Act is to provide for the coordination needed to develop and implement a 911 system for Saskatchewan. The provision of a 911 system will require cooperation between numerous organizations.

The powers of the minister are defined in section 5. The minister is responsible for the coordination of the 911 initiative and is provided authority to establish and implement a province-wide 911 system. This will involve developing technical standards for such things as communication equipment and training, mapping and addressing, signage, call-taking and dispatching. It will also involve coordinating agencies or departments in such things as training, information

collection, and addressing.

The minister will recommend areas of coverage for the 911 system and the locations of public safety answering points.

Financial provisions are contained in section 7. The 911 system is not without costs. The proposal is to fund some of the costs through a monthly fee collected by SaskTel on telephone lines. These fees will be expended for the development, implementation, and operation of the 911 system. The department will, in each fiscal year, provide a report on revenues and expenditures to be tabled in the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Participation in the 911 system is required by the legislation as outlined in section 8. We cannot deliver a system that provides service to only part of the province. Gaps in 911 service delivery are not acceptable.

Our volunteers are seen as a critical component in responding to 911 calls and in the delivery of emergency service in many areas of the province. For this reason, section 9 provides liability protection to volunteers who may assist or respond to a 911 call.

Section 10 provides that it is an offence to place false calls on the 911 system or otherwise interfere with the operation of the system.

Section 12 provides the authority for Lieutenant Governor in Council regulations. It provides for the confidentiality of information used to build the 911 database, such as SaskTel customer data, central survey and mapping, and health databases if required. There is also provision for excluding an organization from the system if there is a logical reason for this and the exclusion would not impact on 911 service to the public.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of related amendments to The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Act. The related amendments provide authority for SaskTel to deliver the 911 telecommunications service and to establish and collect fees on telephone bills to cover the 911 communication equipment and costs for the 911 system and public safety answering points.

Section 14 provides similar legislative provisions to The Saskatchewan Telecommunication Holding Corporation Act. This extends the 911 provisions to SaskTel Mobility.

Mr. Speaker, I believe all of the provisions in this Bill can be supported by members of the legislature. They are essential to the achievement of a comprehensive 911 service for rural Saskatchewan. I beg to inform the Assembly that His Hon. 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. 43, An Act respecting the Development, Implementation and Operation of an Emergency 911 System and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be now read a second time.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this very important piece of legislation. Everyone in this province, be they rural or urban, northern or southern, rich or poor, deserve the right, the high sense of security that our society can provide. A province-wide 911 system is only one small piece in that puzzle. Fundamentally of course, who can be opposed to a concept of comprehensive emergency services?

However, my caucus colleagues and I are not completely clear on all of the in's and out's of the system proposed by the minister, so we will be asking for time to study it further. There are definitely some concerns we'll want to raise in debate and in committee because this is a huge commitment of taxpayers' dollars. We want to make sure that the system represents the best interest of the people and not merely the best interest of the NDP government.

First of all, we do recognize that this Act will go some distance in providing a greater sense of security for our people, particularly in communities outside urban centres. For too long, access to health and emergency services in rural and northern areas has been severely lacking. We have problems with roads in very poor condition, and as well, many industries in logging and fishing has some problems in terms of responding to emergency needs when we see different communities fund-raising to make up for the lack of proper equipment, and the list goes on and on.

Don't get me wrong — I'm not attacking the health professionals in our province. On the contrary, I think they do an admirable job considering the financial and geographical limitations they are facing in northern Saskatchewan.

Our dedicated volunteer fire, police, and ambulance departments face less than ideal conditions, yet they continue to help their communities. However, northern and rural areas need and deserve more, particularly now that so many of the health services in these areas have been gutted — a choice that this government made in their last term.

Even if this system is implemented, it will take five years before it's operating. Now that makes it close to 10 years since the government has reduced services and shut down hospitals. That's a long time without decent access to health care. The Emergency 911 System Act proposed by the government will provide \$5.6 million for the development, implementation and operation of the Sask 911 system. This apparently includes a \$2.4 million contribution by the province on behalf of the municipal governments. And make no mistake, it is the municipal governments who will be paying.

Who can forget that this necessary 911 system allowed the government to scrap their promise to return 10 per cent of VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues from our towns, villages and RMs (rural municipality)? The cost of Saskatchewan 911 also includes \$3 million to upgrade the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) province-wide system.

Mr. Speaker, it's sad that such a vital system doesn't warrant a larger contribution by this government, especially after it has

raked in a quarter of a billion dollars in VLT revenues since 1993. Surely more can be done for everyone in this province with those funds. This is a meagre contribution by this government. It can — and it must — do more.

The proposed system, if the minister is to be believed, is a highly advanced one that hopefully will serve our people well. One of our major concerns is that this legislation seems to give the minister of SaskTel and her department bureaucrats a massive amount of power over the system. This in itself is odd since the emergency system is a Health issue, a Social Services issue, and a Justice issue as well.

Should SaskTel really be completely 100 per cent in charge of something like this? That's a question that has got to be answered before this Act is passed. Under the Act the SaskTel minister will be the one entering into agreements with emergency service providers, municipal councils, Indian bands, health boards, and anyone else that seems fit when establishing the system.

Again, shouldn't there be some accountability somewhere else? After all we're not simply talking about a new phone system. We're talking about a vital cog in our health care and justice systems.

But in the Bill before us, the minister of SaskTel has the power to recommend how many and what locations answering points will be established. She is also the one responsible for coordinating a province-wide street address system and for developing a quality control manual. This is a vital aspect of the entire system because of the rural road system which is largely unmarked.

According to the Act, the minister of SaskTel will appoint a committee to advise her on these matters. That's all well and good and probably very necessary. But we really question whether she's going to be able to oversee such a vital system.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister in charge of SaskTel going to have the capacity to care about what is happening in my constituency? As you know, some of my constituents are over 1,000 kilometres away from Regina. When the minister is trying to cope with strikes and rural amalgamations, how important are those people going to seem to her in her department?

Mr. Speaker, I am not doubting the minister's intentions because I am sure they are honourable. However, I am expressing some concern on behalf of the people I represent and I should also take a moment to express some of the concerns on behalf of the Saskatchewan taxpayers particularly, because the minister has control over these funds.

I understand that she may direct money to developing Sask 911 from the department she administers or SaskTel itself. How will she do that — especially when Crown corporate bureaucrats always seem to be the ones who will tell government what to do.

I also wonder about section 8 which states that, when requested

by the minister, the municipalities, district health boards, emergency service providers, telecommunication providers, the phone companies, government departments or agencies, and Crown corporations shall participate in the development, implementation, and operation of the Sask 911 system. That's a lot of people to order around.

And what is she going to do if they refuse? It would be a shame if the minister had to come to the session every day carrying a big stick. On the recommendations of one appointed cabinet member, all these people will be forced to enter in agreements and develop standards, protocols, systems, and procedures. That again is a lot of power.

(1630)

I suppose the government thinks it is doing voluntary organizations a favour by not holding them liable for their work only if they act in good faith, taking part in the system. That's very kind.

She apparently would not only have the power to direct the proceedings, she'll have the power to pass judgement and to decide on the sentence. Oh oh, it sounds like there's going to be yet another lawyer in the NDP cabinet here. And this one will be running emergency services. That's twice as bad, Mr. Speaker.

What is particularly troubling is that this Act is supposed to give the government powers to make regulations on all sorts of things, including defining, enlarging, or restricting the meaning of words or expressions, prescribing standards, prescribing training and information, and prescribing any matter that the cabinet sees fit. As far as we are concerned, this is a very dangerous power.

Before the Bill is even considered as legislation, we need to know why the power is unilaterally in the hands of the NDP government. Why are municipalities or any other participants not included in the development of the system? The government is happy to break out a promise and vacuum VLT money out of their communities, but they certainly don't want municipal input. The whole process needs to be questioned and therefore the whole Bill needs to be questioned.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus needs more input from the people who will benefit from the system. We like the idea behind a comprehensive 911 system and we've been proponents of such a system in the past. However, because we feel we need more input into the details and possible ramifications of this Bill, we ask the House to adjourn debate on this issue.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 32 — An Act to amend
The Local Government Election Act**

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 32, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1996. This legislation covers election procedures in all urban and northern municipalities, and all

school divisions in the province. The Act is reviewed and renewed after each province-wide round of local elections, Mr. Speaker. This Bill makes mainly routine amendments to local election legislation.

There are, however, several substantive amendments. These amendments, in general, were requested by local governments. They were then reviewed in detail by a working committee made up of representatives of SUMA, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), the city clerks' association, as well as municipal and school administrators. Representatives of these organizations worked closely with the officials of my department and the Department of Education to help prepare these amendments.

The first amendment of some significance that I want to mention is the provision to permit disabled voters to vote at any poll in their polling area that is easily accessible, rather than the regular poll.

This will permit disabled voters to avoid the inconvenience of being sent off to another poll if they show up at a poll in their neighbourhood that provides easy access. At the present time, the Act requires advance polls to be readily accessible, and it states that regular polling places should be accessible to disabled persons whenever possible.

A second reform contained in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is a new section that allows municipalities to make use of computerized voting or computerized vote counting if they choose to do so. Some cities have requested this amendment. They point out that this enabling provision is found in local election legislation in a number of other provinces.

It does not mean, however, that city elections will necessarily make use of this new section immediately. Some city administrations have been studying the computerized vote-counting methods used by cities in other provinces to see if they make the local election process more efficient and cost effective. But they are still evaluating these methods. They told us that they want the necessary legislation in place to permit them to proceed when and if they are ready.

A third reform, Mr. Speaker, allows school board employees to run for office for a school board that employs them if they first take a leave of absence during the campaign period and if they resign should they be elected. This right to participate in the democratic process is already available to municipal, provincial, and federal employees. This amendment responds to an SSTA request that this House extend similar rights to school board employees.

A fourth reform of note I want to mention is the provision to permit voters to mark their ballots with any colour and with writing instruments other than the traditional lead pencil. This flexibility is found in various forms in election legislation for federal and provincial elections. This change was requested by city clerks and supported generally by other local government groups. It will help to ensure that each voter's intention when he or she marks the ballot is taken into account.

In addition to these four highlights, the Bill contains a number of administrative amendments that will streamline procedures and potentially save local tax dollars for cities, towns, villages, and school boards, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the local government organizations and their representatives who served on the working committee that helped prepared the amendments reflected in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 32, An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this piece of legislation, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1996.

First of all, I want to commend the Minister of Municipal Government on the effort that she and her department have put into this Bill. I do however have some very real reservations about parts of it.

I want to speak first on the issue of school division elections. I note that sections 5, 6 and 7 of the government's Bill all provide for school division elections to be held using a mixed formula — a formula where some parts of the school division are divided into wards and other parts have candidates running at large.

I have to say that this type of solution may appear to make sense in many cases. For example, some school divisions contain a rural area where it makes sense to divide the territory up into wards, and also an urban area where it may be best to have candidates run at large, that is, without a ward system. This change brings the legislation into line with The Education Act which already provides for this type of election.

I worry about the relevance of this change to the law in view of the government's stated intention to completely reorganize school divisions in many cases. We have heard that the Minister of Education has attended closed-door meetings of school division members and administrators and told them, in so many words, pick a buddy or else we'll choose one for you.

One has to ask, is it really worthwhile spending the time and effort cleaning up minor inconsistencies in the legislation governing the election of school division board members when the whole school system is under such a threat from the Minister of Education?

The next point which gives me some concern is section 8 of the Bill which changes the rules regarding who can vote in the election of councils for resort villages. The change that is proposed by the Bill would give residents of other provinces who own or lease land in one of our resort villages the right to vote in the local elections. At present, the requirement is that a person must have resided in Saskatchewan for at least six months before acquiring the right to vote in resort village elections.

Now I want to emphasize that I value the contributions, both

economic and community wise, of the cottage owners of this province, including those who reside in other provinces of Canada. Saskatchewan is a beautiful and clean province with clear lakes, pristine forests, and an abundance of wildlife. It's not surprising that we find people from other provinces coming here to build cottages and homes in our resort villages.

On the face of it, there would seem to be no reason why such people should have any restrictions on their right to vote. But before we pass this legislation however, I will have a number of questions to ask the minister in the committee. Whether she has any figures on how many new voters this change will entail. Will it mean that non-residents will be in the majority in some municipalities? If that's the case, we will want to be careful to ensure that year-round residents continue to receive the full range of services that Saskatchewan residents have come to expect from their municipal governments.

I find myself with the same concern when it comes to section 9 of the Bill. That section permits a non-resident who leases a property in a resort village . . . may vote in school division ward elections. We will want a legal assurance from the minister that education in resort villages will not be sacrificed by under-funding resulting from allowing non-resident lessees to vote and perhaps dominate school division elections.

These are just some of the concerns that come to mind upon a careful reading of Bill No. 32. And so I hereby move adjournment of second reading of this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 36, The Municipal Government Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment and Repeal Act, 1996.

This legislation is a housekeeping Bill. It is a Bill that will change a number of Acts but will not effect any changes in government policy. For example, sections 2 and 4 simply propose changes to The Agricultural Development and Adjustment Act and The Community Bonds Act, respectively. In each case we are replacing former department names with the current names.

Section 3 proposes a change to The Assessment Management Agency Act so that when the agency's new multivolume assessment manual is completed, it won't have to be reproduced at significant cost in the *Saskatchewan Gazette* but it will still be available for those wishing to review it.

Section 5 incorporates some gender neutral language and extends the deadline for the posting of appeal hearing dates under The Conservation and Development Act to provide people with sufficient time to arrange their affairs prior to an appeal hearing.

Section 6 removes a reference to local improvement districts in The Grain Charges Limitation Act as the last local improvement

district was disbanded back in 1976.

Other sections incorporate some gender neutral language and also the correction of what may be considered clerical errors.

Section 7 of the Bill corrects the phrase "Conservation District notice" where it previously incorrectly said "District Conservation notice" in The Heritage Property Act.

Section 8 will amend The Hospital Revenue Act to reference the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency which was given responsibility several years ago for determining equalized assessment, formerly a responsibility of the Minister of Urban Affairs.

Section 9 will repeal The House Building Assistance Act. The house building assistance grant program was cancelled back in the 1979 budget, so this Act hasn't been required for some time.

Section 10 will update some names of government departments in The Industrial Towns Act.

Section 11 will clarify some wording respecting petitioning procedures in The Local Improvements Act, 1993. The current legislation is unclear as to when certain deadlines for petitions will apply. The amendment will fix that problem.

Section 12 will repeal The Senior Citizens Home Repair Assistance Act. The grant program administered under that Act was cancelled in the 1988 budget so the legislation is no longer required.

Section 13 and 14 update department name references in The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990 and The Time Act, respectively.

Section 15 will amend The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act to confirm in legislation that employees of the park come within the public service superannuation plan. The employees have always paid into the plan but no acknowledgement of that contribution or of their participation in the plan has ever been recognized in the legislation.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a package of housekeeping items and I urge all member to join me in supporting this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 36, An Act to amend or repeal Miscellaneous Statutes Concerning Municipal Government. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on this Bill, Bill No. 36, entitled The Municipal Government Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment and Repeal Act.

Mr. Speaker, while the Bill is largely a housekeeping Act, even

housekeeping Acts deserve the careful scrutiny of this House. When one carefully scrutinizes this legislation, one does indeed find more than a few points which deserve mention.

One change is long overdue. Section 16 of the Bill provides for amendments to The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act. The employees are participants in the provincial government employees superannuation plan. These men and women have been making contributions to the plan since the park opened in January 1991 even though there has been no legal foundation to the deductions and no corresponding legal entitlement to the benefits.

This is an astounding situation. Here we have dedicated employees regularly making contributions to the superannuation plan, actually having these monies being deducted from their pay cheques each month, and all the while there has been nothing legal in place to guarantee that these employees would be entitled to benefits under the plan.

In summary, I congratulate the Minister of Municipal Government for bringing forward this change to the legislation. But I point out that this should have been done over five years ago. In fact it should have been done by the previous Tory administration before they were voted out of office in the fall of 1991. When this NDP government came into power in late 1991, I would have hoped they would have moved faster on this issue. Evidently it was not a matter that was of great concern to them.

It's also interesting to note that the Bill contains a section, section 9, which entirely repeals The House Building Assistance Act. This was a program which went out of favour with the previous NDP government lead by Mr. Blakeney after the 1979 budget. It permitted grants to be paid under a program called the house building assistance grant program. It's a fair question now to ask the government, if your old Blakeney era program is no longer any good, what have you got to replace it? Or have you finally decided that this is one area where government really has no useful role to play after all? It would be interesting to hear what Mr. Blakeney would say if he could see you now.

Another interesting point that I notice in the Bill is the change to The Local Improvements Act, 1993. I notice that section 11 of the Bill attempts to clear up the confusion over time frames for the certification of petitions for or against local improvements. Whenever local improvements, such as new sidewalks or ditches or publicly funded landscaping are proposed, there are always levies that go along with the improvement. When the improvements and the corresponding levies become the subject of opposition by petitions, it's important to be able to understand the time frames involved. When do the petitions have to be submitted? When do they have to be certified by the assessor? It would be nice to clear up these points. Unfortunately, it's impossible to see how the amendments put forward in this Bill will clarify those time frames.

But one of the most serious difficulties I find in the Bill is the decision by the government to exempt the Saskatchewan

Assessment Management Agency from the requirement to print its new assessment manual in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*. I realize that the new assessment manual will be published in several volumes and that some measures to control the cost of publication may be desirable, but the *Gazette* is the traditional method by which the government publishes its new regulations.

If there is going to be an exemption granted, then I think that some very clear and unambiguous new sections also have to be passed making sure that the new assessment manual is readily available and widely accessible to the public.

The government knows perfectly well that SAMA's (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) new assessment manual will be dynamite and that it is bound to cause controversy. It's disturbing to see that the government already seems to be trying to sweep the controversy under the rug by limiting the publication of the assessment manual.

These are some of the concerns of our caucus with this Act. In view of these concerns, I hereby move adjournment of second reading of the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 40 — An Act respecting Pharmacists and Pharmacies

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Pharmacy Act, 1996.

Over the past several years, our government has been working closely with the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to arrive at a new, updated statute to regulate pharmacists and retail pharmacies in Saskatchewan. This Act is the culmination of that work.

Mr. Speaker, a key component of this Act is its public accountability provisions. For example, public representatives will now be included on the association's council and discipline committee. Discipline hearings will now be open to the public.

The association will file an annual report and its activities with the Minister of Health. And, as is the case with other health professions, by-laws which potentially impact the public will require ministerial approval. This approval process will allow for consultations with key stakeholders such as physicians, dentists, and health employers.

Mr. Speaker, a feature of this Act is the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in other words cabinet, to make regulations with respect to drug schedules and who may prescribe drugs. This flexibility does not exist in the current Act. Of course, activity of this kind would require consultation with the pharmaceutical association. At the present time, only physicians, dentists, and veterinarians may prescribe drugs. Other trained health practitioners, however, are being permitted across Canada to prescribe a selected range of drugs. An example of this is optometrists.

With these regulation-making powers, the Act can respond to

future changes. With respect to drug schedules, these are measures which determine who can sell drugs, where they can be sold, and under what conditions they may be sold.

The previous method of amending drug schedules was quite complex. As new drugs are continually coming on the market, a flexible method of listing these drugs in the appropriate schedule is required. The new Act has taken this requirement into account.

While the regulations will specify broad categories of drugs, such as prescription drug pharmacy only, the specific drugs will be listed in by-laws. Amendments to the by-laws can be made more easily to accommodate changes in drugs on the market. For some categories of drugs, the association will simply file the by-laws with the Saskatchewan Justice. For other categories of drugs, the approval of the by-laws by the Minister of Health will be required.

Mr. Speaker, another important feature of the new Act is that it clarifies and expands the authority of the association to set standards for the operation of retail pharmacies and to monitor or audit their operation. Should the proprietor of a pharmacy fail to ensure that appropriate standards are met, disciplinary action may be taken against the proprietor.

Mr. Speaker, the regulation of pharmacies by the association will not extend to hospitals or such other pharmacies operated by district health boards. The standards for these pharmacies are often quite different, given that they primarily serve clients of a facility or institution. The standards for these pharmacies are set by the Canadian society of hospital pharmacists and are included as part of the hospital accreditation process.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this new Act will serve the profession and the province well into the future. It contains all the newer features of professional legislation. It also contains features that are unique to the pharmacy sector. And it is more responsive to our changing health system and the needs of the public.

Accordingly I hereby move second reading of The Pharmacy Act, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address the issue of pending debate on The Pharmacy Act, 1996. New legislation in this area has long been overdue as it has been 18 years since the last Act with regards to pharmacies and the regulation thereof was introduced and consequently enacted in this House.

The Bill before us today will, if passed, replace the outdated pharmacies Act, 1978 that no longer addresses and is not able to meet the needs and issues contained in the new professional legislation that affects all pharmacists and pharmacies across our province. The Act before us today does address many of the shortcomings of the current legislation, but it also makes leave of a series of questions and concerns that beg answers.

The Pharmacy Act, 1996 will require the Saskatchewan

Pharmaceutical Association to file an annual report to the Minister of Health each year, and we as a caucus see that as a positive step in the right direction as it highlights accountability.

A large part of this Act deals with professional and criminal misconduct and the consequent charges and penalties that may be imposed. The penalties for professional misconduct range from suspension of a pharmaceutical licence to criminal charges. Penalties for summary offences will increase drastically by this new legislation, and this is seen as a step towards more responsible administration of drugs and pharmaceutical products. When dealing with the dispensing of drugs to the public, penalties for betraying the trust and endangering the health of the general public cannot go unnoticed and without sufficient punishment. The safety of the public must always come first.

This Bill brings the pharmacy profession into the 1990s in many ways, but there are still some current concerns on the part of our caucus and on the part of pharmacists who will be affected by this new legislation. There are areas that we, as a caucus, feel need more clarification. These areas are with regards to the possibility of pharmacy ownership by government or district health boards. It is not fair that yet another area of our economy should face the fear that they may have to compete with governments for profits.

Section 19 deals with the issue of a permit to run a propriety pharmacy to anyone who meets the predisposed conditions. There is concern on the part of pharmacists that the door may be open for district health boards to own and run pharmacies in an attempt to make money and meet their bottom line.

Many smaller, local pharmacies and pharmacists see this as a threat to their economic well-being. Competition is welcome, but competition with government is often difficult to win. With these concerns on our part and on the part of many professionals involved in the pharmaceutical field across our province, and many other concerns still requiring considerable consultation, I respectfully request that the debate on this Bill be adjourned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Chair: — It now being near 5 p.m., this House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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