

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of greatly concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, primarily from Regina, whose petition prayer reads as follows:

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from all over the city of Regina. Thank you.

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

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

The petition is signed from people in numerous southern Saskatchewan communities plus the city of Regina.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from my constituency of Canora-Pelly. They are from the communities of Preeceville, Sturgis, and Stenen.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina and Weyburn.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also am presenting petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre, and 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.

And the people who have signed this petition are from Scout Lake, Colfax, Balgonie, Truax, as well as Regina.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on day no. 32, the 32nd day that we've presented petitions, along with the people from Saskatchewan and along with my colleagues regarding saving the Plains Health Centre here in Regina. 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are mainly from the Preeceville area, but of course some from Regina and in particular from Regina Elphinstone constituency and Regina Albert South — the two areas that should have fought for the Plains Health . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member knows that presenting petitions . . . Order. Order.

The hon. member knows that it's improper to enter into debate while presenting petitions and I'll ask him to conduct himself accordingly in the future.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy which awards all government contracts to the lowest qualified bidder, union or non-union, with no union hiring quotas.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly an important group of people from around the province of Saskatchewan who are with us here today, I believe in your gallery.

And it's members of the Saskatchewan Real Estate Association who are with us here today to observe question period, but I think more importantly, to meet with individual members of the legislature.

And in the letter that members recently received from the president of the real estate association, one paragraph indicates that:

In 1994 we had the opportunity to meet with 38 MLAs and we look forward to a similar exchange of dialogue this year.

I just read that part of the letter to indicate that this is a strong tradition here in the legislature, of members of the legislature meeting one on one with various real estate people from around the province. As well, I understand there's a reception tonight. We look forward to that as well, where we can exchange views and enjoy each other's company.

So I wish all members to join with me in welcoming members of the real estate association here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have an important group to introduce today, Mr. Speaker. I see in every gallery actually there is a good number of the SaskTel workforce with us today. I'd like to congratulate these people on the fine service they have provided in the past, and I'd like the members to join with me to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Deputy Premier in welcoming the people representing the real estate association to the legislature here this afternoon. We look forward to our opportunity to meet with them later this afternoon and also to meet with them later this evening at the reception.

I too would like to join with the government members in welcoming them here this afternoon, and look forward to some very interesting discussions later this afternoon. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, a group of 28 grade 3 and grade 4 from St. Josaphat School in the great constituency of Regina Sherwood. They're seated in the west gallery opposite. And after their time here at the House we'll be having a tour of the building and I'll be joining them around 2:30 to hopefully answer their questions from their visit here today.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add my

voice on behalf of my colleagues in the official opposition to also welcome the people from the real estate association, with whom we will also be meeting later. Welcome. We look forward to meeting with you. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members in the House, people seated, I believe, in all the galleries, Mr. Speaker, workers for SaskTel. And I'd ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming them to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a very dynamic mayor who is in our midst and in your gallery today, Mayor Terry Haggart, from Eastend, Saskatchewan. Mayor Haggart of course is taking a little bit of breather just now coming into the city to discuss municipal affairs. She's resting up as well from the ordeal of the floods that have just gone through her community on the Frenchman River in south-west Saskatchewan.

We wish you well on your visit into Regina today, Mayor, and we hope that we don't see a recurrence of the flood any time in your lifetime or mine. But we know that if it does happen, once again you and your community will come through and you will do what is necessary to work together to solve those problems and to save your community. Great job.

And just as I'm on my feet, we would also like to welcome the members of the SaskTel delegations that are here as well, Mr. Speaker.

Please welcome Mayor Terry Haggart. Please rise.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I just would like to join with my friend and colleague from Cypress in welcoming Mayor Terry Haggart to the Assembly. I would also join with my friend and colleague from Maple Creek in thanking her for all the work that she did during the recent flood.

But also members of the Assembly will know that Eastend is also the home of Scotty and great work being done there based on that tourism development. The mayor of Eastend has had almost everything to do with that project going ahead and wish them the biggest success this summer in terms of tourism.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the House, a new-found friend, a young woman I met this morning when I, along with many of my colleagues, had breakfast with the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. And I would like to introduce the treasurer of that organization, Joann Simon,

please. And would you join me in giving her a warm welcome. Joann.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Welcome Back to Minister of Energy and Mines

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my colleagues over here on the opposition benches, I want to take this opportunity to offer a belated welcome back to the Minister of Energy and Mines.

I understand the minister has recently undergone surgery on his back, and we're all glad to see him back on his feet. Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone can understand the torture that is constant back pain until they have lived through it. I too have suffered from back trouble so my sympathy lies with the minister, and I hope his problem is now cleared up.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House knows it takes a strong spine to get through the day when you're in politics. And my guess, as a cabinet minister your spine has to be even stronger than most. Mr. Speaker, I've been told that in my present role as opposition leader and interim leader of the party, Liberal Party, I should be watching my back constantly to see what's going on behind me.

But I digress, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we sincerely wish the minister a full recovery, but I offer a little warning to him and all of his colleagues in cabinet. Our opposition will continue to dog them daily as we fight for the people of Saskatchewan, maybe even to the point where the minister thinks we give him a pain a good deal lower than the back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Innovation Place Expansion

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today there are over 1,400 people working in a park in Saskatoon, but this is no ordinary park. Because of Monday's announcement of a \$7.8 million expansion at Innovation Place in Saskatoon, there will be literally hundreds more working in this research and development park. But if we travel back in time 15 years to 1981, there were only nine lonely companies in Innovation Place. Now there are 94.

Now travel back to 1991. Innovation Place generated \$54 million worth of economic activity for Saskatoon. And today that's more than doubled to 119 million in economic activity for Saskatoon and 150 million for the province of Saskatchewan.

Monday's announcement of an expansion at Innovation Place brings a new industrial building designed to serve the needs of agriculture and environmental companies, also an addition to the greenhouse and labs at the Kristjanson Biotech Complex. But it's more than that. It's concrete proof that Saskatchewan is

preparing for the 21st century and is building more than a vision for the future, but is building that future to give Saskatchewan people jobs, security, and one of the world's true centres of excellence to build and diversify our provincial economy. Thank you.

Students Fast for World Vision

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend of March 23 and 24, 75 young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years old participated in Naicam's fifth World Vision 30-hour famine. These students came from Star City, Pleasantdale, Spalding, Quill Lake, and Naicam. Youth Alive, the interdenominational youth group of Naicam, sponsored this successful event.

These young people went without food for 30 hours and in the process raised \$3,300. This money is being used to combat world hunger and poverty.

While raising this money, they discovered some of the physical effects of going without food, like headaches, nausea, and chapped lips. They also realized, especially in the final hours of the fast, that it is increasingly difficult to stay focused in their thinking and to keep up their normal level of activity. They now know some of the effects that chronic hunger has on people. The sponsors of this event also provided activities geared towards knowledge of hunger and work being done by World Vision to fight poverty. Mr. Speaker, this is just one way our society is being reminded about those who are daily suffering from hunger and poverty.

I would like this Assembly to join me in commending this youth group and their leaders for trying to make a difference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Law Day

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to report that today is Law Day, a day established by the Canadian Bar Association and the legal community to educate the public about our legal system. And the theme once again this year is access to justice. The goal is to provide the public with information about the laws and legal issues which affect our daily lives.

I'd like to mention a few of the events that are taking place around Regina. The Law Day committee has organized a noon-hour panel discussion at the main library on the very timely issue of whether cameras should be allowed in the courtroom. And the panel is composed of academics, lawyers, and members of the media.

Also, lawyers from several firms are participating in a one-day service whereby they will take inquiries from members of the public seeking general legal information and give free advice. Members of the legal community will be talking to high school students today as well, and tomorrow, about the legal system and the impact on young people.

The Department of Justice, the Provincial Court, and the Regina Law Day committee are offering some free mediation sessions this week for people that want to explore alternative ways of resolving legal disputes. And Law Day committees in Regina and Saskatoon have sponsored an edition of *The PLEA*, which is a quarterly newsletter distributed to elementary and high schools by the Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the purpose of Law Day is to establish rules and guidelines by which we live and to celebrate that we live in a legal system that is characterized by democracy, which they don't enjoy around the world. So I commend the legal community for doing this, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Route of SaskPower's Proposed New Line

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Caribou West Pipe Line Co-operative in my constituency provides a pressurized water line which connects rural homesteads just west of Moose Jaw to the treated water from the Buffalo Pound water filtration plant.

Recently the Moose Jaw district warmly welcomed the announcement that Cargill will build another terminal near Moose Jaw on 32nd Avenue. SaskPower, however, intends to service the site by building a line which will virtually infringe on the right of way occupied by the cooperative's water line.

The route chosen may also involve a costly procedure of punching lines under the double-lane Trans-Canada, which could be avoided by taking another route. Members of the cooperative inform me that this provincial road, which also services other major facilities, may need to be upgraded in the future, forcing SaskPower to move the proposed line.

Mr. Speaker, the cooperative suggests that the Minister of Highways expand the right of way, allowing the power line to be placed safely away from the water line.

In closing, I strongly urge the government to address this situation so Cargill's arrival is welcomed by all. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Habitat 2000

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, recently National Wildlife Week was held across Canada. Saskatchewan students played a big part in this event, as they always do. I take particular interest in this matter because my constituency includes territory that is home to all kinds of wildlife habitat, and that includes Prince Albert National Park.

Educational kits were distributed to schools in the province by Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management for Wildlife Week. These kits, called Habitat 2000, included a wildlife habitat improvement action program for young people. Students are encouraged to improve as much habitat as possible

for wildlife by the year 2000.

In the past six years, Saskatchewan schools have come up with impressive projects, schools that have won awards or have been recognized for their achievement. They include Palliser Heights School in Moose Jaw; the 1991 grade 11 class at Carpenter High School in Meadow Lake; the 1993 grade 5 class at St. Pius X School in Regina; K to 6 students at Winston Churchill School in Lloydminster; the Westmount Elementary in Moose Jaw; and Reynolds Central School in Melfort.

Congratulation to those schools and all the students who are participating in these projects. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Golden Grains Farms

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, not long ago I reported on the growing success of Prairie Malt in Biggar. Malt, as we all know, is made from barley, which has been around for a few thousand years at least.

Today I want to mention another business in my constituency also based on barley, which is taking this traditional grain and creating a new line of barley products for the discriminating consumer. This is another case of Saskatchewan enterprise which combines an available resource, modern technology, entrepreneurial excellence and cooperation, and current marketing techniques — a Saskatchewan success story at Dinsmore in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency.

Golden Grains Farm Co. is the creation of Gord and Marge Thomson, Marg's two brothers, and the Joe and Arlo Lytle families. They have taken hull-less barley, an old grain with special food and fibre value, and explored new uses for it. From this new strain they have developed three new products — hull-less barley flour; rolled hull-less barley; and hull-less barley cereal — Saskatchewan grown and Saskatchewan processed.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan area REDA (regional economic development authority) — another wonderful success story — Entrepreneurs 2000, worked with Golden Grains to bring the products to market where they are today: available in Rosetown, Saskatoon, Regina, and Edmonton, and soon to a much wider market area.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good news story of diversification, cooperation, and entrepreneurship. I wish the Golden Grains Farm all the best and urge members to try a new barley product — this novel, non-beverage form. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Government Amalgamation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Government faced some tough questions

from municipal leaders this morning, and given the recent statements by the minister, it's no wonder.

On the issue of amalgamation the minister has stated that these determinations are best made at a local level. On the other hand, the minister has threatened to tighten the purse-strings on local government who may not wish to amalgamate.

This morning the minister indicated her government has, and I quote:

... finally reached a point where using the round-table discussions as the vehicle and we'll get back to talking about a framework and protocol for how we're going to approach municipalities that have expressed a wish to have some change.

Will the minister explain why it took her and this government so long to finally realize that proper consultation should have proceeded legislation on such a controversial issue?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, if the member is referring in terms of legislation again to The Service Districts Act, The Service Districts Act is about everything except amalgamation, everything except governance. Although the Act has been tabled in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, it appears the members opposite haven't read it yet. And I would, you know, I'd be glad to answer their questions at any time in any form. But first of all I wish they'd read the legislation so that their questions would make sense.

Mr. Speaker, some of the municipalities in this province want to move into the 21st century. They want to move forward. Municipalities have, local governments have, served the people of this province well, but for 90 years, Mr. Speaker, there hasn't been any change. There are those who have indicated to us that they want to change.

So unlike the members opposite who want to live in the past, who want to keep their heads buried in the sand, municipalities are progressive, Mr. Speaker, and we're working with them to move into the 21st century.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the minister that the members of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) must also have their head in the sand because they agree completely with us.

Mr. Speaker, the minister and this government have claimed that full and proper consultation took place before they introduced The Service Districts Act. However the minister admitted this morning to the media and again I quote:

We don't intend to proceed with it any further at the current time until we're sure that we have a pulse on what the majority view is out there.

Mr. Speaker, this statement is a clear indication that there was no proper poll consultation. This government would know the pulse out there if they had taken the time to hear what local

leaders have to say instead of telling them.

The minister indicates her government does not intend to proceed with this Act at this time. Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to go one step further: give local governments time to come to decisions on sharing services and withdraw this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised at the members opposite trying to put words in the mouth of the leaders of the municipal organizations in this province. I had a meeting this morning with members of the executive, including the president of SARM. It was a very cordial meeting. Had a meeting last Friday with the executive of SUMA, a very cordial meeting.

We have agreed. We have a scheduled meeting for April 26 to talk about a framework for how we will move together with municipalities who feel they want to share services more efficiently, that we will develop a protocol for how they will do that. It's very cordial, Mr. Speaker. We're working with those organizations and with their members, and the atmosphere is very good, and we're making very good progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, as this House is aware, I introduced a private members' Bill earlier this week that would require liquor outlets to post signs indicating that drinking alcohol could be harmful to the health of an unborn child. The Minister of Health indicated to the media yesterday that this initiative was too simplistic. He further stated that a committee was formed in 1992 to study this issue and are looking at something much more complex.

Mr. Speaker, while this working group studies the issue and looks for a more complex solution, an estimated 47 Saskatchewan children are afflicted with fetal alcohol syndrome each and every year.

Will the minister make a commitment in this House today that he will introduce a Bill that isn't so simplistic during this sitting of the legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I'd like to say to the House, Mr. Speaker, that this issue of children affected by fetal alcohol syndrome is not a political issue or a partisan issue with respect to which that member and I would have any disagreement. Something should be done about it, and the member has made a useful suggestion, I think.

But what I want to say to the member is, there is a working group established which includes representatives from the community, including the Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps in Children, and I've asked the community to

come forward with some recommendations.

And what I say to that member is, this isn't political. This isn't partisan. Let's give the community an opportunity to come forward with their suggestions, which we've asked them to do — and which I have every confidence they'll do in the next few months — before we come up with a solution without consulting the people whose opinion we've asked for, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Strike

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the union representing striking SaskTel employees made a request earlier this week that a mediator be appointed to help end the labour dispute. The union obviously believes that the two sides in this strike are at an impasse, and mediation is the only route by which a settlement might result. As union spokesman Ron Carlson states, there's a need to bring somebody in who can look at this from an unbiased point of view and make a recommendation.

Will the minister in charge of SaskTel explain why she is so opposed to mediation, if in fact she favours an end to this labour dispute?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I have to remind the guests in the Assembly that the rules of the Assembly don't provide for participation in the proceedings of the Assembly, and I'll ask you to simply note that.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite. I thank him for his question and I think the best I can do is read a letter that I provided to the Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union prior to noon today. It reads:

Dear Mr. Carlson: Thank you for your letter of April 15, 1996, requesting the appointment of a special mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute with SaskTel.

Officials of my department have talked to both parties in this dispute about your request for mediation. They advise me that there does not appear to be sufficient flexibility in the bargaining positions for mediation to be successful at this time.

My officials will continue to monitor the situation very closely. If there is any change in positions which indicates that mediation (would) . . . be helpful in reaching an agreement, it will be provided.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the union wants an end to this labour dispute and the people of Saskatchewan also want an end to it. And in spite of the fact that SaskTel is saving two and

a half million dollars a week in salaries, the minister indicates her government wants an end to this labour dispute.

However, she refuses to consider mediation as an alternative. It would appear that the striking workers are more concerned about supplying the proper services to people of Saskatchewan than the government.

One might go as far as suggesting that this government is attempting to use this collective bargaining process, not as a means to an end of the dispute, but to their advantage. Will the minister explain if that is the case, and if not, will she make a commitment in this House today to bring a mediation into this dispute?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I clearly indicated to the member opposite that we have not ruled out mediation. There is no point in putting a mediator into place when the position seems to be as hardened as is indicated from the galleries here today within this legislature.

We feel that the collective bargaining process can work and will work. I encourage the parties to go back to the bargaining table, discuss what their positions are, and when it's indicated to me, as Minister of Labour in Saskatchewan, that there's movement from the positions that are so entrenched at the current time, if there's a need for a mediator to come into place to successfully find a resolve to the situation that we're all concerned about, at that time I will in fact appoint a mediator, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I will have to remind the guests in the Assembly that it's not permitted to participate in the proceedings of the floor, and I will ask for the cooperation in respect to the rules of the Assembly for all members, all guests who are here.

Addictions Treatment

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Minister, we have recently spoken to a counsellor who works for school divisions counselling youths suffering from drug and alcohol addictions, and this counsellor is extremely concerned about your government's decisions to close Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre and move it to the Calder Centre.

He has tried to admit youths to the Whitespruce centre but has been told that no more admissions can be made until after August 1 when the move to Saskatoon is completed.

Mr. Minister, addicted youths who finally agree to go through treatment can't wait four months for the help that they need. And as this counsellor put it, you have to strike while the iron is hot, otherwise most addicted youths change their mind.

Considering that fact, the fact that treatment only takes two or three months, Mr. Minister, why are you refusing to allow these young people the treatment into . . . that they need at Whitespruce centre? Why are you turning them away?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Leader of the Third Party that you do have to strike while the iron is hot. And the instruction I have given to the department and to Whitespruce is that admissions should indeed continue. And that's my position; that's the position of the government; that's the position of the Department of Health.

If somebody has given the member information contrary to that, I'd like the name of that person and I will deal with that situation, because that person that needs treatment should get the treatment and that's the position that we're taking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We've been told that a couple of exceptions to this rule have been made, such as the young mother who took her concerns to the newspaper last week and as a result of that received treatment for her addicted child.

We think that it's unacceptable, Mr. Minister, to leave youths hanging at a time when you are making renovations at the Calder Centre and making it available in Saskatoon effective August 1.

Will you commit today not to turn any youths away from the Whitespruce Centre who need help? And if you have to move the centre to Saskatoon, so be it; but at least allow Whitespruce to treat addicted young people in the meantime.

Will you commit, Mr. Minister, to allowing Whitespruce to operate at full capacity in the meantime so all addicted young adults will receive the treatment that they need? Will you make that commitment this afternoon, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I will make the commitment that young people will get the treatment they need.

The member is correct that when the matter has been brought to our attention that somebody has been turned away, we have said, don't turn them away. If somebody's being turned away, I'm as concerned about that as the member is, and that is not the position of the government.

At some point, because Whitespruce will be moving, they will have to accommodate the young people in another centre; there's no question about that because they'll be moving. But the member's point is well taken that these young people, if they need treatment and they've been properly referred, they've got to get the treatment. That's the position of the government. That's the position we've been taking.

If anybody's turned away, I want to know the details of that person's situation, in confidence, and the member can give that

to me. And I assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that, as I have to date, I will ensure that young people that need treatment, get treatment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Political Function Advertising

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). It seems like the minister is a little bit of a slow learner, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago we caught the minister using his MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) communications allowance to mail out information to NDP (New Democratic Party) members. This included fund-raising information for an NDP raffle and an NDP curling bonspiel.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is at it again, only this time he's a little more hi-tech. He's now using his MLA fax machine to sell tickets to the Yorkton-Melville NDP spring banquet which was held last Friday in Yorkton. The tickets were \$15 a piece, if you were interested, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, Board of Internal Economy directives clearly state that your MLA allowances are not supposed to be used for material which solicits donations to a political party or attendance at a political function. Why did you do this again, Mr. Minister? When are you going to learn that the MLA allowances are not to be used for partisan political activities?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member. I want to advise the member opposite that the function that was held in our constituency this past week was a federal function. And the information that was circulated to the constituents, not only in the community of Yorkton, but was circulated to members across the entire constituency. That information was put out in a variety of different forms.

It was a wonderful event, Mr. Speaker. We had well over 160 people who attended it. We had fine representation outside of our building that day. And I want to inform the member that we're very pleased with the kind of support that we got at that constituency banquet that evening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that the minister not only admits it but is indeed proud that he's using taxpayers' money to solicit funds for the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, your member doesn't seem to learn. Your minister for SPMC and your member for Last Mountain-Touchwood and your former member from Melville were all caught using their MLA mailing privileges for partisan purposes. Your Provincial Secretary was caught selling NDP perogies out of his cabinet office. And now your minister for SPMC has again been caught using his MLA fax allowance for partisan purposes.

Mr. Premier, what action are you going to take to discipline

your minister? When are you going to send the message that this is not appropriate activity to be conducted out of MLA offices? Will you put a stop to these ongoing activities; save the taxpayer the cost of paying for a token cabinet minister by removing this two-time offender, the minister for SPMC, the member from Yorkton, from cabinet.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I commented on my first statement that the constituency event that was held in Yorkton was a federal event and that there were a number of individuals who participated. We have a federal riding constituency that looked after the mailing out of a variety of different amount of information.

Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of the fact that my fax machine in my constituency office was used for the sending out or the printing of any tickets. And I make that statement without any knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

And if in fact there was some involvement by the previous members, as the member from the opposite benches states, that's a matter that I think the other members will need to speak to on their own. But I . . . and I know that in the past those members have made their retractions public. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Surgery Waiting-lists

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of this House a news item indicating that the NDP government in British Columbia has provided \$100 million in funding to improve patient care and ease pressure on waiting-lists for open-heart surgery. And I'd like to send some of these *Vancouver Sun* articles across to the cabinet minister so that they could follow along with me here today.

Mr. Speaker, obviously \$100 million is not the total answer. However, as the Liberal Party of BC (British Columbia) states rather appropriately, the NDP set a fire and are now trying to put it out. Given the fact that our health care system is an inferno here in Saskatchewan as a result of the cut-backs to front-line care and reductions of services because of the actions of this NDP government, will the minister indicate if his government is prepared to make the same kind of commitment here today in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member's always fond of sending me over papers to look at. Well I've got a paper for the member to look at today. I'd like one of the pages to distribute this to the Liberal Party. And what this paper I'm going to distribute today is, Mr. Speaker, is a picture of a man kicking the door of this Chamber.

Now who is this man? I'll tell you who it is. It's a former leader of the Liberal Party kicking the door of this Chamber down to protest the introduction of medicare in this province and this country because the Liberal Party has always been opposed to medicare, Mr. Speaker. And a few weeks ago the member from

Kelvington-Wadena was up on her feet advocating that we go to American-style medicare where you pay 9,000 bucks a year for medicare.

And you know, the member from Wood River will be familiar with this man, this former Liberal leader, protesting the introduction of medicare, because that man went from the Liberal Party . . . the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) Party to the Liberal Party, and his son went from the Liberal Party to the Conservative Party, and that member was going to go from the Liberal Party to be an independent if he couldn't get the former leader of the Liberal Party to leave the Liberal Party, but he succeeded so he could stay in that party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. The minister's time had expired, but I want to remind all hon. members, as has been previously ruled in the House, if you expect to be recognized by the Chair, to follow the rules and the protocol in standing.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And if the Minister of Health wants to compare pictures, I recall a session or two ago where in fact the pictures that I brought in of a SaskTel phone bolted to the side of the Ponteix Hospital I think was a little more dramatic than what you could handle. It was all because of the Deputy Premier's wife closing down the hospitals all throughout the province.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Order. I think the hon. members will recognize that there's no room for debate to bring in family relationships for hon. members. And he knows that the words he chose reflect that. I'll simply ask him to withdraw those unparliamentary remarks and put his question.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw the comment about the Deputy Premier's wife. She was the former minister of Health.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. I wasn't asking the hon. member to explain his remark. I simply asked him to withdraw the unparliamentary remark and then put his question. Would the hon. member for Wood River just simply withdraw the remark and put the question, to withdraw it without qualification. Just withdraw the remark and put the question.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government in British Columbia have admitted they made a mistake and are taking action. They realize that people's health care is more important than balancing the budget.

In Saskatchewan this NDP government fails to even acknowledge the devastation that they have created in our health care system. Hospitals are closing. Front-line care-givers are being fired, and services are a shell of what they used to be. Furthermore the waiting-list for open-heart surgery is two to three months, which is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister indicate what it will take to wake this government up, which is so obviously out of touch, and that they're not even aware of the chaos they have created in the health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, these people are not the protectors of medicare. These people are the opponents of medicare, and their cousins in Ottawa took \$50 million out of the health care system in the province of Saskatchewan this year. We put in a dollar for every dollar the Liberals took out of health care.

And while I'm on my feet, let me add that when the Liberals weren't busy in the '60s opposing medicare, they were busy passing laws taking away the right to strike from the workers at SaskTel and everywhere else in the Government of Saskatchewan.

When they pass Bill 2 and they get up in this House and pretend that they're the friends of labour, when the third party proposes a law that would take away the right to strike, that party did the same thing in government.

They get up and pretend they're the champions of the people, for working people and for health care. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned in the House, the waiting-list for open-heart surgery is two to three months in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice, the member for Regina Lakeview, knows personally the anxiety that a family goes through when a family member is in need of open-heart surgery. His father was in need of open-heart surgery last fall and was lucky enough to receive such surgery.

Will the Minister of Justice tell this House how long his father was on a waiting-list before undergoing open-heart surgery and whether he feels the current waiting-list is acceptable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I'm going to rule that question out of order. The hon. member knows that in question period . . . Order. The hon. member knows that in question period, questions must be put to ministers to deal with matters related to their portfolios.

And I'll go to the next question.

High-risk Offender Identification

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm in a welcoming-back mood today. Although it's a little belated, I welcome back the Minister of Justice from Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, for weeks in this House the official opposition has

been pressing the government to act immediately and bring in a protocol that would allow police to fully identify dangerous sex offenders living in our communities. This would not only protect the police from legal action if they chose to publicly identify pedophiles or other such sex offenders, it would also bring some sense of security to our citizens, and particularly our children.

Now that he's returned from Ottawa, I wonder if the Justice minister can assure the House he will act immediately to implement such protocol and to support the Bill that the official opposition has put forward; not unlike, Mr. Speaker, when a dangerous situation is noticed, there is at least a temporary warning sign put up until the proper permanent directions can be put in place. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the question of the Leader of the Opposition. I was in Ottawa on Monday and spent some time talking with the federal Minister of Justice about these issues, and we had agreement that this is a national problem that needs to be dealt with in a coordinated fashion by all of the ministers of Justice and the provincial governments in concert with the federal government.

We will be having this as a major point of discussion at our meeting on May 9 and 10 in Ottawa of all the provincial ministers of Justice, together with the federal Minister of Justice.

The area of community notification — we are working on that here in Saskatchewan with a able group of people including the Saskatoon City Police, the Regina city police, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). And I'd just like to close by quoting Chief Maguire in Saskatoon who I've been working with. He says:

I think we're on good track here. I would sooner have one (protocol) that we're going to be able to live with rather than have to do patchwork. Saskatchewan has an opportunity here.

We're going to do this in a Saskatchewan way and in a way that preserves the safety of our families and our children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 74 — An Act to amend The Government Organization Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Government Organization amendment Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In keeping with our policy of open and accessible government, we table the answer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The answer to question 71 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 45 — An Act to amend The Tax Enforcement Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Provincial Mediation Board Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to move second reading of Bill No. 45 to amend The Tax Enforcement Act.

This Bill will realize significant benefits to municipalities. This will be achieved in part by simplifying and clarifying the steps involved in local tax enforcement by reducing minimum time limits to allow the tax enforcement process to proceed more quickly and by enabling municipalities to recover more of their costs incurred in the tax enforcement process.

This Bill has been developed following an extensive consultative process. Helpful assistance has been provided by members of an advisory committee and task force over countless hours during the past few years. Representatives have included members of urban and rural municipal administrators' associations, the city clerks' association, the school business officials' association, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, a number of provincial departments, and eight city administrations. Their assistance and support is greatly appreciated.

This Bill will speed up the tax enforcement process. Presently municipalities typically wait a minimum time period of 28 months between the date when taxes are in arrears and the date when they are permitted to request a transfer of title. It is proposed that the time period be reduced to a minimum of 16 months. In addition, the Provincial Mediation Board may grant a municipality's request to transfer a title up to six months earlier if specific criteria is met. Consequently, if a property is in a deteriorating state that requires a high expenditure for clean-up or it has been abandoned by the owner, a municipality will be able to start proceedings months earlier than at present.

Amendments will also streamline municipal proceedings by reducing administrative work for low-value parcels. Costs to a municipality, and of course the taxpayer, will potentially be less than they are at present. Accelerating the process will also bring matters more quickly to the Provincial Mediation Board, increasing prospects for negotiating successful payment of taxes rather than a municipality resorting to taking a property.

These time lines are not mandatory. Municipalities may choose to give delinquent ratepayers more time, for example in rural areas where agricultural revenue varies annually. Minimum time lines will permit councils to be sensitive to local circumstances.

Property owners rights will not be infringed upon by this Bill. Property owners or other parties with interests may continue to redeem the property before a municipality is granted permission from the Provincial Mediation Board to take the title.

Proposed amendments will provide that municipal costs will be added to the arrears of taxes. Costs incurred in the tax enforcement process and associated with the property itself after a municipality acquires title will be recovered.

Examples of costs and expenses to be recovered include repair and maintenance to buildings, structures, and fixtures, environmental clean-up, and other municipal expenditures such as fees for legal services and advertising. Many of these costs may be retrieved by a deduction from the surplus proceeds of the sale of the property by tender or auction.

In terms of the effect of the amendments on taxpayers, the shorter process will reduce procrastination of property owners whose taxes are due. As a result, other taxpayers will not have to carry a financial burden imposed by tax dodgers for as long a time period.

In comparison with other provinces, Saskatchewan will compare very favourably in terms of procedural time lines. These changes take into account the needs of all classes of municipalities in this province.

I ask all members to support this Bill and to move second reading of it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to address the proposed amendments to The Tax Enforcement Act that have been put forward in Bill 45, The Tax Enforcement Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill has three or four key points that deal, for the most part, with the waiting periods on title transfers when taxes are in arrears. This Bill addresses the concerns that have been voiced on the part of associations such as SARM, SUMA, the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, and many others over the past number of years.

We as a caucus reflect these concerns, but there are still parts of this Bill that we feel need more clarification and research. We need to know the potential impacts and outcomes of these amendments.

I agree that 28 months is a very long time to wait to change titles when taxes are in arrears, but we don't want to see a Bill come into force that will allow titles to change on a whim.

I understand that the waiting period for changing titles will be

reduced to 16 months. In some cases, the Provincial Mediation Board will be able to change a title up to six months earlier than before. That means there could be less than a one-year wait when it comes to changing titles. We are concerned that this may not be a sufficient amount of time to have all aspects of the tax problems sorted out.

Some of the changes to this Act will hopefully clear up some of the confusion on the part of municipalities surrounding collection of taxes in arrears. The new sections do apply when the building for which the taxes have not been paid is not owned by the landowner. This clarifies the tax collection process goes to collect taxes owing on the building and not on the land. This Bill also simplifies the procedural requirements that must be met before the collection of tax in arrears can go ahead.

There is a large part of this Bill that deals with the use of fees and how they are calculated in specific cases.

This particular amendment ensures that the costs incurred by municipalities collecting taxes that are in arrears will be covered by payments made to the municipalities. I would think that everyone would agree that municipalities should not have to pay fees to get the tax money owed to them back.

This Bill also clearly states that the conditions under which land may be sold in order for municipalities to collect taxes are met. When land is sold, the municipality's council may abate or cancel the taxes owed on the land in question.

This Bill deals with many other aspects of The Tax Enforcement Act that do need more research and explanation. And therefore I respectfully request the debate on this Bill be adjourned.

Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 46 — An Act to amend The Municipal Board Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 46 amends The Municipal Board Act. The changes being made complement amendments to the three municipal Acts respecting the assessment appeal process. This Bill focuses in particular on three areas intended to streamline the Saskatchewan Municipal Board's operations.

First, the Act currently provides that assessment appeals concerning whether the assessment manual prepared and adopted by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) complies with legislative requirements come to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, known as the SMB.

This Bill changes this process since in essence there are legal questions. The Bill provides for review of such issues by the Court of Queen's Bench on an application to the court.

(1430)

Second, the Bill changes the process for handling assessment appeals where legal issues arise in the course of an appeal. The present legislation requires the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to prepare a stated case, to refer to the Court of Appeal for this purpose. While this option is to be retained so that the SMB can seek legal guidance from the court for itself, it had previously resulted in significant delays to the process of resolving appeals.

Instead, parties to assessment appeals will now be able to apply directly to the Court of Appeal to consider questions of law or the jurisdiction of the SMB if the court is willing to hear them. This change should speed up the process. It will avoid the delay of waiting for a stated case to be prepared and then submitted to the court as well as the conflict position that the previous process placed the board in. A judge will decide directly whether an issue raised by an appellant has any merit or not.

The third general matter dealt with in the Bill relates to fees. The SMB has authority now to set fees to hear assessment appeals, but there is a significant backlog of such appeals that have been filed but for which the fee has not been paid. The appeal cannot proceed until the fee has been paid. The amendments will clean up this situation, requiring either the fee to be paid so the appeal can proceed or the appeal to be dismissed. The business of the board should not be left in limbo.

Lastly, the Bill includes some other provisions relating to correcting errors made in previous board decisions, the size of a quorum for assessment appeals, and confirmation of the board's authority to hear Lloydminster assessment appeals. These changes should have a positive impact on the SMB's assessment appeal operations.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 46, An Act to amend The Municipal Board Act.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This legislation brings forth some very significant changes to the way the Saskatchewan Municipal Board will function, and how municipal appeals are handled. This Act would change the Municipal Board's quorum to one. We do hope that reducing the quorum will give the board more freedom to hear more appeals. One of the problems with the current municipal appeal process is the length of time it takes for appeals to be processed and hopefully this amendment would improve access for any party filing an appeal.

Some other sections of this Act do clarify the board's jurisdiction in areas including Lloydminster. Lloydminster is now within the board's authority.

We believe another positive aspect of this new legislation is the amendment to section 40 that will allow the Municipal Board to correct any decisions it has made if that decision was based on a clerical error or incorrect information.

Another major change that this Act proposes would allow challenges of SAMA's assessment manual to be sent directly to the Court of Queen's Bench while actually bypassing the

Municipal Board. The explanatory notes on this Bill say that the government is hoping this amendment will provide another avenue for parties to remedy their appeal, if they are not satisfied with SAMA.

Unfortunately, this may be an oversimplification of the appeal process and raises some jurisdictional questions. The Court of Queen's Bench will not usually hear an appeal of a judicial review until all other appeal avenues have been exhausted.

Another section of this Bill places more restrictions on who may appeal a decision with the board. We have concerns any time access could be restricted, because the onus is now on the municipality or the person making the complaint to prove that they are affected by the order.

The main changes proposed by Bill 46 will shift much of the responsibility of the appeal process onto the party filing the complaint.

As this Bill clearly demonstrates, the legal process can be extremely complicated and confusing. If a municipality is the party laying the complaint, it may have the funding to hire lawyers to help process their appeal. But I am concerned that if an individual is a party filing the appeal, the costs might be a deterrent. Once again this a question of access.

Overall, while the government's intent for this legislation may be to give parties more direct control over the municipal appeals, unless they are comfortable with the legal process, they will have to seek help from lawyers. The question becomes, who picks up the tab.

So while Bill 46 does propose some positive changes and clarification of the current municipal Act, I do see some potential major problems with the implementation of this Bill. We need more time to investigate exactly what these implications may be, and therefore I move we adjourn this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 70 — An Act to amend
The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and
to make consequential amendments to other Acts**

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 70 amends The Urban Municipality Act, 1984. This Bill is intended to ensure that provincial legislation pertaining to municipalities is responsive to evolving local government needs.

Many of the changes will assist municipalities by providing increased authority to manage the effects of the province-wide reassessment in 1997. They will focus on improvements to the process for hearing assessment appeals and provide the necessary authority to locally established tax policies.

Other legislation this session that is part of this initiative includes amendments to the rural and northern municipal Acts, The Municipal Board Act, and consequential changes to The Assessment Management Agency Act.

Mr. Speaker, many of the changes being presented to this House have resulted from an extensive review of local government tax policy, facilitated by the Department of Municipal Government. The need for this work is driven by SAMA's scheduled reassessment in 1997. This reassessment will update assessed values from 1965 to 1994, nearly 30 years. As a result, many shifts in assessments and tax incidence will occur that may need to be managed.

As part of this review, the department prepared and released background papers for discussion purposes. Several consensus-building sessions were facilitated involving local governments and their associations and other stakeholders. Proposals were developed based on what was heard and submitted, and more discussion took place around these proposals, with changes being made to try to provide a balance of interests.

I would like to particularly thank the representatives from the three local government associations — SUMA, SARM, and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), for their partnership in developing the local government tax policy reflected in these amendments.

I would also like to thank the numerous interested parties from across the province representing business, industry, residential associations, and other groups, who on many occasions shared their ideas with one another and provided advice to department representatives. Many compromises were reached and many problems solved in these consultations. More work will be done on a few remaining aspects of local government tax policy, to be undertaken over the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, first I will summarize changes relating to the assessment appeal process. The assessment appeal process provides an avenue for business or property owners to challenge the assessment values for their property or business as a means of testing their correctness or validity. The appeal process in Saskatchewan consists of two levels. Appeals are heard by boards of revision, often, in fact usually, constituted of members of councils in municipalities. These boards hear evidence and determine whether an assessment was properly arrived at.

Decisions of the board of revision can then be appealed to the assessment appeals committee of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. The assessment appeals amendments before the House will ensure a more effective process and hearing of assessment appeals at local boards of revision, and will clarify the role and authority of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. This is particularly important in view of the coming reassessment in 1997.

More specifically, new requirements for better stating a person's grounds of appeal and providing written submissions for consideration by the board of revision are included. Measures for allowing full disclosure of information among parties, while protecting the confidentiality of information, are advanced. Written reasons are to be prepared and provided for each hearing.

Recognizing that the time required for preparing materials may be greater than in the past, the times for filing appeals and documentation are extended. Appellants will be responsible for taking assessment appeal hearings seriously and will be required to attend hearings if they wish to preserve their right to further appeal a board of revision decision. New fees may be introduced for appeals at the local level, but would be subject to a maximum fee that would be set out in regulation.

These changes will also improve the ability of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to hear appeals from decisions of the local boards of revision. A better record of the board of revision decisions will be available to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. The Municipal Board will be somewhat more restricted in the evidence it may hear on appeals, as the thrust of these amendments is to place the primary responsibility at the local level where assessments are determined and must be defensible. Where errors have been made there will be an ability to adjust an assessment up or down.

Mr. Speaker, I will now summarize amendments respecting tax policy. First, legislative authority to define property classes and set percentages of value to apply to property assessments in these classes will be provided by the provincial government. Previously this authority rested with the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency. There was a wide consensus in the consultations that these were tax policy measures that belonged with an elected government.

Province-wide property classes will be defined and percentages of value set on a broad basis across Saskatchewan. The province will set these by regulation. With reassessment, significant room must be provided for local municipalities to manage the changes and to feel comfortable with the balance of fairness and equity among property classes.

Accordingly, expanded authority will be provided to municipalities through locally managed tax incidence, through new tax tools, including variable mill rate factors, a minimum tax, and phase-in of tax changes from reassessment. These local tax tools strike a balance between ability to manage these changes and consideration of taxpayers' interests.

Mill rate factors give the ability to manage tax incidence among property classes by adjusting the mill rate for specific property classes. A mill rate is set and then multiplied by factors for different property classes.

Provincially defined property classes will be used by municipalities for setting local mill rate factors, minimum tax, and phase-in of tax changes. Cities will have authority to define sub-classes for these purposes.

Mill rate factors may be subject to limits set provincially by regulation. The limits would specify the amount of difference in mill rates there could be among property classes. Mill rate factors will apply to taxes levied for municipal purposes, unless another taxing authority such as the school division agrees to have them applied to its levy as well.

This approach respects the rights of other taxing authorities,

offers potentially greater ability to manage tax incidence, and avoids potentially conflicting tax policies being set by different taxing authorities if set independently.

School boards will continue to set uniform mill rates, but municipal mill rate factors can be applied to the school as well as the municipal rate by agreement of the school board. A minimum tax is already authorized now, but provisions will be fine-tuned to permit it to be levied for separate property classes.

A council could raise a portion of its revenues based on a uniform amount of tax related to provision of certain services to property, for instance.

Authority to phase in tax changes from reassessment over up to three years was provided in spring 1995. This will continue based on provincially rather than locally set uniform property classes.

Business assessment and tax as a separate assessment, and tax on business occupants, will be optional. The decision will be made by municipal councils, since the decision implies a shift in tax burden at the local level. This option eliminates the requirement to maintain a business assessment roll and thus expands the current municipal authority to exempt from or abate business tax, while reducing administrative overhead.

Where a business assessment is retained, existing out-of-date methods for calculating business assessment will be replaced by using a percentage of property value to calculate business assessment. This will be set provincially by regulation. The Department of Municipal Government is currently doing analysis as to the appropriate percentage.

SAMA will be responsible for developing a method to allocate business assessment among multiple business occupants of a property. Municipalities that do their own assessments may determine this on their own, if preferred.

(1445)

A vacancy adjustment for commercial property is to be used if a municipality decides not to have a business tax on business occupants. This adjustment will reduce the tax shift to owners where commercial property is vacant or not used for business purposes. Regulations will set the method for calculating this.

The rights of other taxing authorities, such as school divisions, will be respected by requiring a municipality that decides not to have a business assessment and tax, to still raise within that municipality the same amount of taxes for other taxing authorities that they would have received. This will prevent school tax shifts from other municipalities resulting from one municipality's tax policy decisions. Such shifts are of particular concern in rural Saskatchewan. The method for calculating this will be set by provincial regulation.

School board access to the revenues from business tax is also preserved if a municipality decides not to continue with business assessment and tax, since the municipality is required to adjust the school levy within that municipality to raise an

equivalent amount of taxes.

Mr. Speaker, provincial legislation will be clarified in respect of assessment and taxation of machinery and equipment in the mining, pipeline, and oil and gas production industries. Amendments related to the mining and pipeline industries are essentially status quo provisions. For mines, machinery and equipment for extraction and primary production of a mineral resource will be assessed and taxed, but machinery and equipment for processing or refining will not. Machinery and equipment along pipelines will not be assessed and taxed. The line of pipe, plus land, buildings, and structures for pipelines, will continue to be taxed.

Assessment and taxation of oil and gas well machinery and equipment will change. In summary, machinery and equipment used to produce oil and gas — including for enhanced recovery — to store oil and gas, to transport it to a battery or gas handling site, or to compress gas, will be assessed and subject to property tax. Machinery and equipment used to process, treat, separate, or dehydrate oil and gas at battery or gas handling sites will not be assessed.

These changes are made following extensive consultations with industry and the local government sector. Industry competitiveness was a key consideration. Saskatchewan's marginal wells carry a higher property tax load on a per-barrel basis than wells in other provinces. Over recent years, there has been a progressive expansion of the well machinery and equipment that has been assessed and taxed. There will be tax shifts resulting from these changes, but the alternative is to risk seeing less industry activity and losing the numerous benefits from this.

The tax policy amendments have been drafted to reflect the input received and the extensive consultations that have occurred. Regulations to cover some of the more technical matters are currently being prepared in consultations with SUMA, SARM, and SSTA. In total, the tax policy package I have just outlined will help local governments manage the effects of reassessment.

Mr. Speaker, there are also two reforms to the existing legislation regarding petitions to require municipal councils to hold a plebiscite. Firstly, this Bill implements a 90-day limit on the collecting of signatures on the petition. Secondly, this Bill streamlines procedures for verifying a petition.

Both reforms echo legislation that has proved itself in other jurisdictions. Both reforms respond directly to requests from SUMA and the city clerks' association. The 90-day provision will give ample time to gather signatures on a petition. However it will also ensure that the process of getting signatures does not drag on for a year or more and that the views expressed in the petition are current. It will help local councils do the job they're elected to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the amendments in this Bill can be supported by members of the legislature. They are in the interests of municipalities and their residents. I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having

been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly, and I move that Bill No. 70, An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be now read a second time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the comprehensive outline of the proposed Bill by the minister. However, I welcome this opportunity to address the House on the amendments being proposed in this Bill.

The Bill covers a wide variety of topics. It sets forth new rules for the destruction of older Bills that are no longer being used, and it establishes new rules for the preparation of consolidated version of by-laws. It will mean that the rules regarding the submission of petitions to municipal councils are changed. If this Bill is passed, it will mean that letters to councils will no longer be treated as petitions, but rather as simple communications.

The amendment will allow for the creation of business improvement districts. It will require each of the districts to be governed by a management board. The amendment provides for the creation of business improvement districts even in situations where the urban municipality chooses not to assess business for taxation purposes. The Bill will allow for levies to be paid to the operators of businesses in these districts.

On another vein, the Bill deals with regional parks, and if passed it will mean a cut-back . . . or it will cut back the role traditionally played by urban municipalities in the operation of regional parks service.

Included in this Act are some complex rules regarding assessment. In the one case, the assessment will not take into account machinery and equipment from used pipelines, yet there is to be an assessment of resource production equipment which is used for oil and gas production in enhanced recovery, storage, and compression.

Fair value assessment is to be determined by regulations, such as the classes of property, classes of improvements, classes of land, and the improvements according to use, and to be determined by regulation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Bill with many parts and many ramifications. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will require some further consultation with more of the citizens of Saskatchewan. Under the circumstances, I therefore respectfully request that this debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to introduce important partners of the province of Saskatchewan from RBC Dominion Securities limited in the east gallery. We have with us Mr. Tony Fell, the chairman and chief executive officer; John Cook, the vice-president and director out of the Toronto office; and Mr. Dennis Mulvihill, vice-president and director from Regina.

Mr. Speaker, to the members in the gallery, these people have been . . . were recently one of the important leaders in the very successful Cameco share offering and our ongoing rotating leads in a number of our other financial syndicates, and I want to introduce them to the House and welcome them here on your behalf.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 71 — An Act to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 and to make a consequential amendment to The Municipal Board Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 71 amends The Rural Municipality Act, 1989. The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 is the major statute setting out the powers and responsibilities of rural municipal councils across the province.

This Bill forms part of a package of amendments to municipal legislation that includes Bills in many of the urban and northern municipal Acts respectively, as well as a Bill relating to The Municipal Board Act and consequential changes to The Assessment Management Agency Act.

Tax policy changes are included that parallel the amendments the government is making this session to other municipal legislation. Municipalities will be able to manage the tax impacts of reassessment through a variety of optional tax policy tools.

We are providing improvements to the assessment appeal process for rural municipalities to help cope with potential increases in assessment appeals resulting from reassessment in 1997. These amendments will require more effort from rural municipal administrators, but they reinforce the role of the local board of revision as the primary appeal level for assessment appeals.

Before describing the amendments, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the many participants who provided information and advice and contributed to the development of the package of amendments before the House today.

I particularly thank the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities for their partnership in developing the tax policy proposals, as well as the other local government associations and representatives of interest groups. SARM, SUMA, and SSTA worked closely together to develop a consensus position, and this is particularly noteworthy.

This Bill, as well as the Bills amending the urban and northern municipal Acts, reflects many compromises that have been made, taking into consideration all interests that emerged at a series of consensus-building sessions in August and November, 1995, facilitated by my department. The amendments do not necessarily represent everyone's first choices, but trade-offs have to and have been made to reach a practical set of proposals that expand local government autonomy while protecting other interests.

Mr. Speaker, tax policy tools that rural municipal councils will be able to use include the establishment of mill rate factors which are a form of variable mill rate, a minimum tax for one or more types of properties, and the ability to phase in tax changes over a three-year period of time.

In addition, rural municipalities will also have the option of deciding whether or not to have business assessment and tax. This range of tax tools is necessary because even for RMs (rural municipality), the impacts of reassessment will differ widely among individual municipalities, depending on the respective amounts of different kinds of assessments within their boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, these provisions do expand municipality authority and autonomy in making tax policy decisions. In the discussions I mentioned, some of those representing rural industry expressed concerns about how rural municipalities might use new tax tools since they don't vote for rural councils but do pay taxes.

The amendments in this Bill recognize other taxpayer interests. There are provisions for the province to set limits on local tax policy if need be. For example, limits on mill rate factors may be necessary under some circumstances. Province-wide percentages of value can also be set and applied to assessments in particular property classes. There are also provisions to limit school tax shifts to other municipalities that could arise from the tax policy decisions of individual municipalities. Such shifts in tax burden are a significant concern in rural Saskatchewan. The amendments being made recognize the principle that one municipality ought not to be able to arbitrarily shift tax to residents of other municipalities.

In keeping with the goal of ensuring Saskatchewan's economic competitiveness, this Bill clarifies the rules for assessment and taxation of machinery and equipment for mines, pipelines, and oil and gas wells. The provisions are status quo for mines and pipelines, but the trend in recent years to expand assessment and taxation of the oil and gas industry has been halted. Clearer limits on what machinery and equipment is to be assessed are spelled out.

Mr. Speaker, these changes, and parallel ones being made in the urban and northern municipal Acts, will provide more consistent tax policy and assessment legislation across all Saskatchewan municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this Bill. I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill,

recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly.

And I move that Bill No. 71, An Act to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989 and to make a consequential amendment to The Municipal Board Act be now read a second time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to this Bill. It appears at first to be an earnest attempt to update and modernize The Rural Municipality Act which was enacted in 1989. I just have a couple of things that I would like to say at the outset about this Bill.

Firstly, it is refreshing to see some indications that this government gives at least some recognition of the importance of the rural municipalities of this province. When we read the Bill 33 entitled The Service Districts Act and hear the pronouncements of the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the subject of rural municipalities, we can't help but fear that the long-term plan of this government is to perhaps slowly but surely replace the rural municipalities with service districts.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that this fear is not well-founded. But I would be remiss in my duties to you, sir, if I failed to report the fear because the fear is widespread and sincerely felt in my constituency.

It seems a bit ironic, Mr. Speaker, that on the one hand we are being asked to modernize and update The Rural Municipality Act of 1989 while on the other hand we are also being asked to pass a Service Districts Act which many right-minded people think is the forerunner to the eventual abolition of the rural municipalities. Mr. Speaker, we're not sure which way this government is going.

This Bill, The Rural Municipality Amendment Act 1996, contains a great many different types of provisions on a wide variety of subjects, and much of it is worthy of sympathetic consideration by the Liberal opposition. A number of the areas cause me to have some concerns, however, and I'll just speak to them briefly.

There are some completely new rules regarding the obligations of rural municipalities with respect to lost and unclaimed property. These are found in section 15 of the Bill which sets up a completely new section of the Act to be called section 255.3.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the 90-day rule in this section is realistic. In the rural areas moveable property is often left unattended for periods of time that are longer than in urban areas. This Bill allows rural municipalities to sell unattended, unclaimed property after 90 days, and I think we shall have to

have a careful look at that.

The Bill also provides that a rural municipality may pass a by-law providing that businesses are not to be assessed within the boundaries of the municipalities in situations where buildings occupying the business have been vacant for some period of time or are vacant at the present time. We will want to examine these new rules in order to make sure they are fair, and particularly to make sure they do not result in the tax burden being unfairly shifted to those businesses that are occupied at the present time.

My attention was drawn also to the provision of the Bill dealing with regional park services. The Bill appears to radically reduce the traditional role and responsibility of the rural municipalities in the provision of park services. The Bill seems to state that, except for certain exceptions, the rural municipalities will have no longer any meaningful role to play in the area of parks unless they have entered into an agreement with the park authority.

It concerns me, Mr. Speaker, to see the traditional level of government — the municipality — being shut out or moving towards being shut out of decision making in the field of regional parks.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, there are the assessment rules as set out in this Bill. It's interesting to see that machinery and equipment used in association with a pipeline are not to be taken into account when assessments are done, but that resource production equipment for the production and recovery of petroleum oil and gas are to be taken into account when assessments are done. We will want to review that carefully with the stakeholders in those areas where pipelines and oil and gas recovery operations are a factor in the valuation of land.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill which the government says brings us one step closer to what they call fair-value assessment. The Bill sets out a vast power for the government to make regulations which will determine how fair value is to be determined. The power to make regulations extend to the creation of classes of property, classes of improvement, and classes are both determined according to the use of the land or improvement.

The Act sets out new rules for the fixing of mill rate factors and review of them from time to time. We will also want to review these carefully in order to ensure that the procedures are fair and that the review mechanisms are economical and fair.

Mr. Speaker, in the view of these concerns that I have and the length and complexity of the Bill and importance of the rural municipalities in this province, I would hereby move that the debate on second reading of the Bill be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 72 — An Act to amend
The Northern Municipalities Act and to
make a consequential amendment to another Act**

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move

second reading of Bill No. 72 to amend The Northern Municipalities Act. The northern Act is the major legislation setting out the powers, duties, and responsibilities of our northern municipal governments.

Mr. Speaker, in general terms, this Bill to amend The Northern Municipalities Act contains provisions that are very similar to those that are contained in the Bill pertaining to The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and The Rural Municipality Act, 1989. As well, a Bill with related changes to The Municipal Board Act and consequential changes to The Assessment Management Agency Act form part of this broad legislative package.

Many of the amendments contained in this Bill are bringing provisions of the northern Act into conformity with the other Bills before you this session respecting assessment appeal provisions, authority to locally manage tax incidence, and reforms regarding municipal referendums.

Mr. Speaker, I will refer the members of this House to my remarks respecting the nature and intent of those amendments to The Urban Municipality Act, 1984. Because the details are described more fully there to the members, I will only briefly review the northern amendments before this House.

First, amendments respecting the assessment appeals process will complement and enhance the existing appeal structure and enable municipalities to manage an anticipated rise in the number of appeals which may result from the new assessment system.

Second, Mr. Speaker, northern municipal councils will have the option to use tax policy tools to manage tax incidence changes which are expected as a result of reassessment. These optional tools include the establishment of mill rate factors, a form of variable mill rate, a minimum tax for one or more types of properties, and the ability to phase in tax changes over a three-year period of time. In addition, northern municipalities will also have the option of whether or not to have business assessment and tax. These are the same tax tools as are being provided to rural and urban municipalities.

These provisions expand municipal authority and autonomy in making tax policy decisions. However, amendments in this Bill also recognize and protect other taxing authorities' interests. Taxpayer interests are also protected with provisions for the province to set potential limits on local tax policy. For example, limits such as capping mill rate factors may be necessary to ensure that the province's resources industry remains competitive, both with other provinces and globally.

In keeping with the goal to ensure Saskatchewan's economic competitiveness, this Bill also clarifies the rules for assessment and taxation on machinery and equipment for mines, pipelines, and oil and gas wells.

Third, Mr. Speaker, this Bill describes changes in petitioning in response to concerns raised by the municipal sector.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation processes and provided their advice respecting

these policies for municipalities in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully urge members to join me in support of this Bill which will further enhance and improve the development of our municipalities in northern Saskatchewan.

I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly, and I move that Bill No. 72 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act be now read a second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and again I appreciate the comments and comprehensive outline of the Bill by the minister. I would just like to discuss this Bill regarding northern municipalities which is before us today. It's fairly lengthy, Mr. Speaker, and it's rather a complex one that deals for the most part with taxation issues on municipal land in northern Saskatchewan.

It is obvious to us that this Bill will have an extensive impact on all municipalities located in the northern half of this province. As this Bill progresses, we must all question the amount of consultation that went into the formulation of these amendments to The Northern Municipalities Act.

This Bill begins with definition adjustments, for the simple reason that consistency and continuity of definitions is required to carry through the body of this Act. The definitions in question deal with the assessment and taxation of pipelines, land, and buildings, on municipal land in northern Saskatchewan.

Two entire subsections of the original Act that deal with petitions have been repealed, only to be replaced by similar subsections that make changes with regard to declaration of petitions, address of people on petitions, and a new 90-day limit to obtain signatures. There is an amendment in this Bill that clearly states the clerk's determination on the sufficiency of a petition is final.

This Bill deals briefly with outstanding costs for services to property and the collection of those costs.

Considerable changes are proposed concerning the disposable . . . the disposal, I'm sorry, of junked material. The changes remove the cost limit to dispose of this material by the municipality. This provides more options to the municipalities for the disposal of junk material. In a time of environmental and ecological concern, providing legislation that will allow, for the most part, environmentally sound methods of disposal to be used is certainly a positive move.

Northern municipalities will, through this legislation, have the option of setting mill rate factors also. But these factors, along with the municipality's budget, will still be under the scrutiny of the minister. This Bill proposes amendments to a great many

aspects of municipal taxation with regards to everything from land and buildings to oil and gas well machinery.

This Bill also proposes revisions to the assessment system for northern Saskatchewan for 1997. Further analysis of these revisions needs to be done before approval of them can be given. Northern municipalities, through this Bill, will be given the option of removing the separate business assessment and tax system on business occupants. Upon their decision, northern municipalities need to inform taxing authorities so that mill rate factors can be applied to levies accordingly.

Assessment appeals and those who can file those appeals are laid out clearly in this Bill. A long list of circumstances for appeals, the appeal hearings, pre-hearing disclosures, and so on, are also outlined in the Bill.

The clarification, the changes in policy with regards to business taxation and assessment as well are included, together with an entirely new subsection with regards to mill rates and how they vary depending on different property classes. Northern municipalities will be able to choose a uniform mill rate or a varying mill rate as well.

Through this Bill, the mill rate factors will be subject to approval, along with mill rates and annual budgets. And as we can all see, this Bill consists of rather a complex set of amendments to an already quite intricate Act.

Due to the length of this Bill and the inevitable impacts that it will surely have on northern municipalities of this province, I believe it is only appropriate that some more time be spent consulting with the people involved to clarify their views on this Bill. I therefore respectfully request that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 73—An Act to amend
The Planning and Development Act, 1983**

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, The Planning and Development Act provides the framework for municipalities to manage the physical development of communities. Municipalities have suggested a number of ways that the Act could be improved. These amendments reflect our commitment of responding to the needs of local government.

The amendments include adding a more effective framework for zoning by-law enforcement, eliminating the advertising requirements for amendments to municipal development plans and basic planning statements, eliminating the requirement for a subdivision approval for most minor oil and gas pipelines, expanding the scope for appeals to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board with respect to zoning regulations, adding flexibility to deal with walkways and buffer strips in re-subdivided areas, and for the exchange or sale of municipal reserves in northern Saskatchewan.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, municipalities have expressed concerns that existing provisions on zoning by-laws do not adequately address enforcement. The government recognizes that municipalities must have adequate means to effectively administer local by-laws. Therefore we have established a more effective framework for zoning by-law enforcement, including authority for municipal inspections of suspected contraventions, issuing compliance orders, and appeals of compliance orders by alleged offenders.

Amendments are included to broaden the definition of capital costs as it relates to development levies in a development agreement and subdivision levies in a servicing agreement. Also we have clarified how interest on servicing agreement accounts existing prior to May 1993 can be dealt with by a municipality.

These changes will help ensure that the real cost to provide municipal services to new developments will be borne by those who will benefit from those services.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there is a need to streamline planning and public notification processes. We have eliminated the requirement for municipalities to advertise a notice of the minister's decision on a development plan or amendment. We have removed the requirement for municipalities to submit an updated capital works program annually to the minister.

Similarly, we have removed the requirement for the minister to publish notice of approval of statutory plans in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*. This will eliminate duplication and save costs for the municipalities.

We have clarified subdivision approval requirements for specific instruments, such as easements and leases, and eliminated the need for approval of minor types of utility line easements.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of planning appeals available to all landowners in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board will now be able to hear appeals on variation of maximum site area or yard size requirements in municipal zoning by-laws. We have also clarified that appeals may be made to the board where a minor variance has been allowed by a municipal development officer.

Dedicating lands for public purposes is important for the physical development of our communities. They are required as part of most subdivisions. We have made a number of changes that will provide flexibility and assist in the administration of this land, including: allowing a municipality to identify specific policies and zoning regulations for municipal reserves in accordance with the Act; providing for the sale or relocation of walkways and buffer strips where there is re-subdivision; allowing for the sale or exchange of Crown-owned public reserves and buffer strips in unincorporated areas in northern Saskatchewan; and clarifying the types of uses which are exempt from municipal reserve dedication.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill are evidence of our support for local governments and commitment to maintaining a legislative framework for effective land use management which serves the public interest and responds to the changing needs of Saskatchewan communities.

I would now urge each and every member of this House to support this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill No. 73.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, thank you to the minister for the comprehensive detail of the Bill that's being introduced.

I would just like to discuss some aspects of it, and upon reviewing it, we have come to the conclusion that a majority of the amendments are simply housekeeping. And we see a lot of positive things, but a couple of concerns I'd like to address. In those cases, the correction of grammar in some sections and modernizing the terminology in other circumstances is a necessary and an unopposed requirement.

The purpose of the amendments to this Act, as we understand it, is to provide a legislative framework for effective land use management. This is necessary in order to continue to serve the interests of the general public while at the same time responding to the changing needs of people involved in planning and development across the entire province.

This Bill eliminates the requirements to advertise for changes to development plans and planning statements. Through this Bill, appeals to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board on zoning requirements and their variations are clarified, and this we see as very positive.

The Bill makes considerable amendments with regards to subdivisions of land and the controls thereof, specifically, with regards to restrictions on registrations and the exceptions to those restrictions. Many of these amendments are bringing the conditions for the potential use of parcels of land well throughout the 1990s. This is done by including telecommunications as one of the many uses of land in this particular section.

Subsections dealing with certificate approvals have been revamped, making reissued certificates valid for a longer period of time, and that's good. This is seen as a positive step as it only reduces administration and paperwork.

There are parts of the Bill that we do question. One particular example is with regards to the minister now being able to authorize unilaterally the sale of a buffer strip that is a Crown title. Currently the minister may authorize this sale only on the request of a municipality. The minister may now do this on her own initiative. This is one area which would like to give closer attention and talk further with municipalities in order to get their input.

The intention of this Bill is to add flexibility to the dealing with

buffer strips and re-subdivided areas. We would like to look a little further at that.

The Bill also proposes to make the exchange or sale of municipal reserves in northern Saskatchewan somewhat more flexible. We would also like confer further with the stakeholders and interest groups in northern Saskatchewan to get their input on the possible consequences that these amendments may have on the people of northern Saskatchewan.

Although many of these amendments have been suggested in part by municipalities, we feel that some further consultation with stakeholders and interest groups is required in order to get a firm grasp of the effects that this Bill may have on the people of rural and northern Saskatchewan.

It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that I respectfully request debate on this Bill be adjourned. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 43

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob 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. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we even begin to talk about the specifics of this Bill, I think we should take a long, hard look at what it will mean to Saskatchewan. We need to look at what systems are already in place, and we need to look at the most effective way to bring emergency service to all in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we strongly support the principle of 911 emergency service, particularly for rural Saskatchewan. We know far better than the members opposite that rural residents need some sort of security. As rural MLAs, we have seen the people of our communities lose access to health care. We have seen hospital after hospital shut its doors to rural residents. We have watched qualified medical and emergency professionals forced to leave our communities because the government just didn't fund health care facilities adequately. And we have listened to our constituents who tell us they are afraid they will have nowhere to turn in an emergency.

They are scared, Mr. Speaker, and they have every right to be. The provincial government is refusing to give them the security they need. People living in rural areas have been forced to stand back while this government chips away at the rural infrastructure. Their protests are ignored. What they find instead is that this government has a plan, and in that plan there is no room for rural Saskatchewan. This becomes clearer every day with every decision this government makes.

Mr. Speaker, more than anything we would like to reassure our constituents. More than anything we would like to establish a reliable base of support to help save lives and to provide our communities with that sense of security. We want to keep rural Saskatchewan strong.

I think that this is the principle behind the government's proposed Emergency 911 System Act. And as I said earlier, we agree with this principle. But, Mr. Speaker, we don't agree with the tangible steps the Act outlines.

As far as we are concerned, the government is just scratching the surface with their proposed plans. Instead of providing solid solutions, they are merely trying to distract people from noticing hospital closures and staff losses. Our biggest worry is that the system proposed in the government Bill doesn't go far enough. It doesn't provide an overall, comprehensive, effective emergency response system, and that's what is needed most — an enhanced emergency system.

If the government's Bill passes as is, people will be able to dial 911 on their phone, and that in itself is a good thing. Right now they are forced to call separate numbers for police, ambulance, and fire departments. The biggest complaint about this is that in an emergency people don't always have access to a telephone book. Unfortunately though, 911 is just a number. If you pick up the phone to call emergency, it will only ring at the service provider location, and this could cause a serious delay in getting help.

In the government's proposed system, the call is taken and then passed on to the appropriate emergency provider. But what happens if they can't reach anyone? What happens if a time delay could mean the difference between life and death? Imagine if a member of your family was choking and when you phoned 911 you were left talking to an operator who has no emergency training.

By playing up this new system as the perfect answer, we are afraid that the government may be creating a false sense of security. An enhanced system could go a long way to avoiding this.

Mr. Speaker, I am amazed that this government has not incorporated in the Bill some of the positive things already happening in Saskatchewan. For example, in the fall of 1991, the city of Swift Current struck a committee to consider a 911 system in their region.

They developed an extensive research proposal which looked at needs, cost-effectiveness, available services, and a number of other factors. By August '94 people of the south-west of Saskatchewan had access to a comprehensive and enhanced 911 system. According to an article in *The Western Producer* from February last year, the system in the south-west links 46 fire departments, 11 ambulance services, and 12 RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) detachments — all through a state-of-the-art computer system and trained communication technicians.

This means that callers aren't just getting a SaskTel operator,

Mr. Speaker. They are getting a person who can help, and that could make all the difference.

What would happen to the systems already in place? Would the government drag them back down to a level outlined in this Bill? Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope this isn't the case. Wouldn't the government be far better off raising the standards outlined in the Bill to match the highest existing marker within the province? This government says it wants to move into the 21st century. If this is true, why would they legislate policies that actually took the progress backwards? I hope the members opposite will think about this before they force it through.

We are not the only ones concerned about this situation, Mr. Speaker. The east-central 911 steering committee raised similar concerns. I would like to read a section from an article published in the *Melville Advance* on March 27 of this year, and I quote:

The government proposal provides no on-line continuing contact with a caller to provide assistance until the response team arrives on site; nor does it provide updating communication en route to the response teams. This proposal has no tracking system to aid the response teams to find the rural location or to coordinate time arrivals.

We suggest that the government consider comments from groups such as these before forcing this Bill through. In the Committee of the Whole, we will propose an amendment to help alleviate these concerns.

Mr. Speaker, another major concern we have with this Bill is that RMs will be required to participate. I think these concerns are well founded, especially given the government's recent threats to rural amalgamation. We need to know what sort of commitment the government will make to providing long-term funding to this system. It would be extremely unfair of this government to tell municipalities they had no choice but to participate and then force them to pay for the system. Especially after the government has told municipalities that their funding will be cut by \$10 million each for the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to relish its power over municipal governments. They have no qualms about forcing municipalities to surrender to the NDP government's plan. Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable, and we will not let this minister lord her power over municipalities' heads. It's dirty politics, and we will not stand for it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will say that the system can be paid for with \$5.6 million of VLT (video lottery terminal) money. The minister will say the system can be run on a cost-even basis.

(1530)

But what the members opposite seem to forget is that the money from VLT revenues was supposed to go directly to the municipalities and health organizations; 5.6 million is just a fraction of what the government has sucked in VLTs. The

government should make good on its promise. With all the promises this government breaks, though, I guess it shouldn't surprise us that they would go back on their word.

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined some of our basic concerns with this Bill. In the Committee of the Whole, we will bring forward some amendments that we believe will make the Bill stronger for all people in Saskatchewan. Before we agree to pass this Bill on to committee, though, one of my colleagues would like to bring forward some further concerns his constituents have. Unfortunately, he was not able to be with us today in the House, so I ask that this debate be adjourned, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 32

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 32 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was trying to get my breath. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have a chance to address this Bill once again before it is passed to Committee of the Whole.

We find most of the proposed changes outlined in this Bill acceptable, but we do have some concerns about a couple of the sections within the Act. I briefly touch on those today, but we would like to bring forward some comprehensive amendments when the Bill reaches Committee of the Whole.

As a former municipal reeve, I am familiar with the election process for local governments. I know that the Act, as it stands now, details the accepted procedures for municipal election. Some of the sections in the Act are simply outdated. For example, the Act presently names the minister of Urban Affairs as the person responsible for appointing temporary members to a local council or board.

Because this government has a minister of everything but Urban Affairs, it only makes sense to pass the responsibility to the Minister of Municipal Government. I know she's been busy lately — and this week in particular, Mr. Speaker — but I'm sure she is willing to accept this extra responsibility. I'm just happy to see the government didn't create yet another million dollar minister plus department to keep the Bill up to date.

The amendments in this Bill will also address some of the issues relating to elections in resort communities. For years, member of the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan, PARCS in abbreviation, have raised the issue of voting, especially as it relates to taxes. Some cottage owners were upset that they were forced to pay equal taxes on their resort property yet were not given the option to run for elected positions or to vote.

This amended Act seems to address this issue in a way that should satisfy at least some of the unhappy property owners. I know if this government actually listened to PARCS'

recommendations . . . Or if it just managed to work it out this way. Given the government's reputation for hearing without listening, I suspect that making property owners happy is a total coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, we also have little objection to the changes to most of the voting procedures. In fact we strongly support some of them. For example, section 65.1, which provides greater accessibility to disabled people, is extremely important and welcome. Every citizen in this province has a right to vote, and we must make sure there is no physical barrier for anyone. Accessible polls are essential if we truly want to promote equality in our province.

The change to voting qualifications also seems straightforward. For one thing, the amendments make the qualifications consistent with citizenship and age requirements. Changes like this are simply housekeeping, and we won't delve on them once we ensure that they will not seriously affect the people of Saskatchewan.

One concern we do have however relates to section 13. This is the section which has eliminated the requirement to place newspaper advertisements before an election takes place. Mr. Speaker, we will be asking for further clarification on the wording of reasonable notice.

Because this Bill will allow owners of properties in resort community who live outside of Saskatchewan to vote in an election, this is also particularly important. People must be given enough notice to ensure they have the opportunity to elect representatives in local communities. In Committee of the Whole, we will introduce an amendment to help define what qualifies as reasonable notice. We also have some reservations about the responsibilities of the returning officer and of the scrutineers. The Bill may transfer responsibility from the returning officer to the scrutineer, and that is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. We would like to have some further clarification on the division of responsibilities.

Although we have voiced a few of our concerns today, we do not have any concerns grave enough to hold up this Bill at this stage. When we go through the Bill as Committee of the Whole, my colleagues and I will bring our concerns and an amendment to the Assembly. With further discussion and clarification, hopefully we will be able to support this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Bill now be passed to Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 5

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 5 — An Act to amend The Education Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join in this debate. I believe that any piece of legislation that

will have a direct impact on our education system and ultimately the children of our province needs to be closely scrutinized. As the past president of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and a long-time teacher in this province, I have been fortunate enough to gain valuable insight into the way education is delivered in Saskatchewan.

I take great pride in our education system, and I sincerely believe that our teachers and administrators are highly skilled and competent people. Mr. Speaker, I know all members of the Assembly will agree with me when I say that education is the backbone of our province. A sound education system goes a long way in defining the people and the quality of life that Saskatchewan residents have grown to expect and to enjoy. A quality education can lead to unlimited opportunities for our children who will one day be the leaders of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the future of our province depends upon the students of today. With that in mind, we cannot sit back and take our education system for granted. We cannot continue to offload our financial problems onto already cash-strapped school boards. We have seen the effects that provincial offloading has on our education system. The teacher/student ratio is increasing due to bigger classes. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the student ratio in Saskatchewan is the largest of any of the provinces in Canada. Schools don't have adequate resources to hire more teachers, and the threat of school closures is becoming a frightening reality.

Mr. Speaker, this must stop. The Minister of Education and her government have a responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan to provide quality, accessible education for everyone. Several years of inadequate funding from this government is taking a toll. Hundreds and hundreds of people have cried out to stop the cuts, but apparently this government has chosen not to listen.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated six years ago that education is a priority for the NDP, and we simply have to find more money. Well we have seen what happens when the NDP claim something is a priority. All we have to do is look at their dismal job creation record, their neglect for the rural residents of Saskatchewan, and of course the absolute decimation of our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that the NDP are now taking their wrecking ball to our education system. Mr. Speaker, we cannot impose legislation without ensuring that it will be beneficial to our educators and to our students. After all, they are the ones who will feel the effects each and every day for years to come.

The approach of our caucus when examining the Bills introduced in this House comes down to one specific objective: is it in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, there appear to be four main issues in this amendment. The amendment that would change the name of the Saskatchewan Book Bureau to the Saskatchewan Learning Resources Distribution Centre is indeed worthwhile. The name change seems to reflect more accurately the scope and purpose of the services provided by the bureau. Mr. Speaker, this is in

the best interest of the public, and I don't see a lot of concern with it. I do however wonder what the cost analysis of the name change will be. Obviously there will be some associated costs in terms of stationery, material, information, etc.

The amendment that would also allow students to consent to the disclosure of his or her records in an attempt to provide information sharing is also worthwhile. The existing provision is in conflict with the local authority of information and protection of privacy Act. Currently students are not able to disclose their records and may not be able to access their own records unless they are accompanied by their parents. Since The Education Act currently is the most restrictive, it must be the one adhered to rather than the privacy Act. Repealing this provision would improve sharing of information and give students access to their own records.

The amendment also deals with various methods of conducting financial transactions. Currently school boards and conseil scolaires have restricted authority in the way in which they can conduct financial transactions. The proposed clause would allow boards and conseil scolaires to keep pace with technological advances such as electronically transferring funds and an automated payroll.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome changes to legislation that will better serve our educators and our administrators. Some of the proposed changes in this Act will indeed be beneficial.

However there appears to be some division between the key stakeholders involved, namely the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. Mr. Speaker, I have to question whether this amendment will address the issues of concern between the SSTA and the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) where a consensus has not yet been arrived at. It is vital that these two key stakeholders are given the opportunity to discuss particular issues in order to reach an agreement that satisfies both parties.

Mr. Speaker, the issue that seems to be causing a great deal of concern for both of these stakeholders is the provisions regarding replacement and temporary teachers. I believe that we cannot take any action without the stakeholders having reached a consensus.

A very important stakeholder in the administration of education is the group that includes directors and superintendents of education. The LEADS — which is the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents — group must be assured that the amended Act is indeed workable and in the best interest of teachers affected but also to ensure that it addresses the needs of students.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to this Act will affect all concerned stakeholders. I can guarantee the minister that these stakeholders will be keeping a close eye on her. This opposition must be assured that all stakeholders are in agreement. The minister must convince all the concerned parties that this Act is indeed doable.

I have been consulting with many concerned people, such as

the SSTA, the STF, LEADS, individual boards of education, individual directors, and I want to continue to do so. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to adjourn debate on this Bill. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

(1545)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Municipal Government Vote 24

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce her officials please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On my left is Bill Reader, the deputy minister of Municipal Government. On his left is Larry Chaykowski, the director of administration. On my right is Ron Davis, assistant deputy minister in municipal services; and right straight behind me is Ron Styles, ADM (assistant deputy minister) of housing. And on his left is Ken Alecxe, who is the associate deputy minister for culture and recreation.

And we'd be pleased to answer any questions that members may want to pose, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Item 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to also welcome the officials with the minister today. It's good to see Bill again; I met Bill before. So welcome to the House today.

First question I have, Madam Minister, is to do with the infrastructure money that we have had, and I notice here that it has dropped from 47 to 28. Could you give us an explanation on that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this just reflects the winding down of the program. As you know, the program has concluded, and there are some projects yet that are incomplete that will be paid out. But essentially the program is finished and is being phased out, and the reduction is a reflection of that.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask . . . with that infrastructure money, some roads were carried over because due — in some cases — due to wetness last year . . . under the infrastructure program. And I understand now this year that some of them have been cancelled and some not. Can we get an explanation why some of them — I actually thought were guaranteed to be carried on to this year — for one reason or another have now been cancelled?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — In response to the member's question I would say this, that the infrastructure money was integrated with the rural road money that's in the revenue-sharing pool. And so it would be a decision of the rural municipality whether or not they proceeded with the project and nothing to do with

the terms of the infrastructure program or any decision made by either level of government that was involved in that. It would be a local decision.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I must be misinformed, Madam Minister, then, because it's been brought to my attention that some of these projects were cancelled by your department. So possibly I'm wrong on that one, but I guess we'll have to leave that one at that.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — To the member opposite, there are some projects in the infrastructure program that was stacked with the rural revenue sharing for roads that are still undergoing a screening process. It basically would be a local decision not to proceed.

But if you have any specific facts, you know, if you want to share them with us, we would certainly undertake to ascertain what their situation is and get back to you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thanks, Madam Minister. I'll check and verify those certain situations and who they are.

In the *Estimates* here, Madam Minister, I notice under gaming funds in '95-96, we have \$4.372 million but in . . . in '96-97 we have that, but in '95-96 we do not. What is the explanation for that, where that came from all of a sudden?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — That item in the *Estimates* represents the anticipated proceeds from casino revenues that will be designated as an entity called the associated entities fund. There is nothing in the fund now because there is not a lot of casino profits yet. But this is the projected share of profits, and that will be distributed by agreements that are already in place — 25 per cent to mitigate revenue losses to exhibitions; 25 per cent to Metis organizations; and the balance of the fund will be distributed to communities by a method that has not yet been determined. We haven't decided what agency to use and the criteria aren't there yet, but it will be related to probably non-government organizations dealing in child poverty, in family violence, that kind of initiative.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Now are we talking here VLT money or casino money or . . . that this fund was set up from — or both? Or where does that come from?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — This arrangement relates strictly to a portion of the profits from casinos and it flows into this budget directly from the Gaming Corporation, which is the corporation which operates the casinos only. And this year it's anticipated that the only one that will be profitable will be the one in Regina. There are others, as you know, that are just opening now but the revenue stream that's anticipated here is for this coming fiscal year and will accrue mostly from the one in Regina.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to move on to futures that the municipalities have, Madam Minister. Can you tell me how much are out in futures or forwarded in futures at this time?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'm advised that the amount that's out in futures right now, or accrued to that, is 18.9 million at the present time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Would it be possible for us to get a list of where the futures are owed, Madam Minister? I realize not today, but after today?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'm told that such a list does exist and we could provide it for you probably by as early as tomorrow.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to get in . . . after the budget now we've had cut-backs in full-time employees. I believe that 13 is the number — is that right? — of full-time employees from your department that has been laid off?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There were actually 19 positions, but some of them were vacant. So there were actually 13 people affected.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Under administration in our estimates, we have here salaries have gone down somewhat, so I presume that was due to this. But under the operating part of that, actually costs have gone up by quite a bit. Can you explain why, when we have less employees, all of a sudden that the operating costs would go up for administration?

(1600)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There are a couple of factors at work here. One is that there was a consolidation of the communications functions, and the other is that the infrastructure program moved from intergovernmental or the Provincial Secretary's department into Municipal Government. So that affected the accommodation . . . like we inherited their establishment that was still related to the infrastructure program.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. As the infrastructure program is winding down, would we expect next year that that would go down again, then?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We would certainly expect that to happen over a year or two as the program winds down, unless of course there's something to replace it. Or, you know, there wasn't anything in the last federal budget, but knowing what we know now it would appear that the establishment would reduce somewhat over the next couple of years.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Under accommodation and central services I see that instead of the budget going down it has gone up. Can you explain really the function of this and why that would have gone up?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — That again would be . . . that's really the answer to the question that I just gave. I thought that was your question.

Yes, it was the consolidation of the communications functions and the transfer of the infrastructure where we would be now

responsible for the space that those people occupy and so on.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to touch just for a minute on SAMA funding, Madam Minister.

And can you give me a breakdown and go back to '91 and what the funding was in '91, '92, and so on, and how it has gone down to the point we are now? Have you got those numbers available?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We don't. As SAMA is an independent agency, although the money comes out of our budget for the core services — we don't have the history with us but we certainly can undertake to provide it.

As you know, the \$4 million this year and last year . . . In the most recent years there has been some transitional funding — a million dollars last year. But they knew this was a negotiated transition and there weren't any surprises there. Everyone was aware that there would be a reduction.

But 4 million is dedicated to the core services and the integrity of the provincial data base and so forth, and that's seen as a provincial responsibility.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to see that there's an increase in the money given to the heritage department and that the government recognizes the growth and realization of the importance of heritage in our province. Can you briefly outline to me the government's vision for the next four years in this very important area of heritage?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Actually in the heritage branch there is a decrease. I'm just finding it here. Just from memory, the increase, I think it's 400 — just a little over \$400,000. And that is the proceeds of some fire insurance that relates to the museum, the royal . . . Museum of Natural History. The fire was about five years ago, and the claim wasn't settled until just recently. So the proceeds of the insurance policy as the result of that incident are going straight into the budget of the museum, and that is really the only increase. Otherwise it is the status quo.

Ms. Draude: — Just to clarify for me, I see that there was 6.991 million last year, and this year is going to 7.199 million, and that difference is the fire insurance.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, just the proceeds of the insurance policy.

And the second part of your question was about our vision. And as you know, we have been circulating cultural or discussion papers through all the areas of heritage, arts and culture. And there are focus groups and public discussions going on. Last year there was a summary called *Responding to the Community*.

So the future vision, if you like, of all of those areas of endeavour that fall within the arts and culture realm within the budget are being determined now by interested parties and community groups, and we'll respond to what they see as their vision.

Ms. Draude: — Is there going to be a decrease in staffing in this whole area of heritage preservation in the province, or is it going to remain the same as last year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There were some position reductions. One related to the Eastend T-Rex, Scotty. Part of the dig was actually over, so they were keeping the interpretative centre open and so on, but the level of activity there has decreased. So there's one person less there and one person less in the museum. There were some contract positions that expired, I think, at the end of the fiscal year, and one of them was not renewed.

Ms. Draude: — The Heritage Foundation will receive the same amount of money as it did last year. Can you break down for me the money that was spent on actual staffing and lease of the building compared to the money that was given to projects, to the communities through the foundation grants?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We don't have the breakdown in exactly the manner that the member asks for, so we can certainly undertake to do that and provide you with those figures within the next couple of days.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. I was just wondering if the amount of money spent on projects that the people could apply for, if that money is still the same or if it's going down, as compared to the last couple of years.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, the amount that's shown in the *Estimates*, the \$345,000, that money is all earmarked for projects. And the salaries of the branch and so on are shown separately. So that 345 is all available to be applied for and disbursed for projects.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me how often the Heritage Foundation board meets?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — They meet four times a year.

Ms. Draude: — There's additional money, I think, unless I'm reading this incorrectly, I think there's additional money given to the Archives Board. Can you tell me how that money will be spent?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The additional money for the Archives Board is for the rental of additional space in . . . this space is the R.J.D. Williams Building in Saskatoon, the former so-called school for the deaf on Cumberland Avenue just down from the university. The University of Saskatchewan now owns that property. And we're renting some space in there for the archives because we have a real space problem.

Ms. Draude: — I was looking at the Western Development Museum and I'm just wondering if the number of visitors there, is it remaining fairly constant?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The Western Development Museum, the attendance is remaining constant. In fact in some of the special events and promotions that they've introduced in the last couple of years has actually increased the number of

visitors.

Ms. Draude: — Wanuskewin Park, does it receive funding from the federal government or from native affairs as well as the grant money that's given from the provincial government?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The 250,000 represents the provincial contribution to operations there. The federal government, during the development of the park around the time that it was designated as an internationally recognized heritage site, did put in some capital money. But to my knowledge the federal government has never contributed any operating money.

The city of Saskatoon contributes some. And then of course they have their funding from owned sources in terms of admissions and the food service that's on site, and that kind of thing. What their total operating budget is, I'm not quite sure.

Ms. Draude: — Has the government spent any more money on this park for promotion of it as a world-class tourism facility or is all the money that's spent on it just in this total of 250,000?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, the provincial contribution would be represented entirely by this figure, and any other money that they use for promotions and their activities would be self-funded.

Ms. Draude: — I'd just like to change into a different department here for a second and talk about the housing department. Can the minister explain if the rental amounts charged in small towns like Spalding, Naicam, and so on — there used to be quite a variation in the amounts that was charged by each town. Has that amount been evened out?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Generally the rent is determined as a percentage of the income of the tenant, so that's basically why it would vary. The rent is 25 per cent of the income of the tenant. So you might have two houses, either in the same town or in nearby towns, that are very similar but the income of the tenant is different, so therefore they would pay a rent that's related to their income, not the size or value of the house.

Ms. Draude: — But I guess I'm not really clear, but there must be a maximum limit or minimum limit of some sort in the towns. Because in towns in my constituency they are saying that people are trying to go from one town to another because the amount of rent is different.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The 25 per cent of income that I referred to is a maximum, but within that, there are some pricing policies for the rent that are levered by the vacancy rates in the town, some factors like that. But it's done very carefully to make sure that lower or higher rents don't affect people moving from one community to another. But there are some other factors that are taken into consideration.

Ms. Draude: — I know that there are some problems even within a small locality like my own where there is . . . some of the towns have their homes absolutely filled at all times and some of them are having a vacancy problem. And I'm wondering if these boards have the option . . . do they have the

ability to change this basic rent or maximum or minimum?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I would respond to the member's question in this way, that local housing authorities don't have the authority to unilaterally make those decisions. But Sask Housing, each year on a regional basis, assesses the market and the needs, and using the CPI (consumer price index), for example, the cost price index, will make some changes that seem reasonable that relate to the market conditions.

And then if . . . so they sort of set guidelines. And if housing authorities want to respond to some need that they see, they would apply to Sask Housing to make changes within those guidelines, but they can't do it unilaterally.

(1615)

Ms. Draude: — Okay, on the home improvement program, I see that there's quite a dramatic decrease in money. Could you explain to me how this happened or what's going to be happening?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — That is the . . . The home improvement program is that approximately 10-year-old program for loans for hot tubs and cupboards and things. A lot of those loans are now being paid down, and this reflects the drop in interest rates that applies to those, the remaining portfolio.

Ms. Draude: — With the changes to the district health or with the health Act, a lot of the seniors are encouraged to remain in their own homes now. And I'm wondering if there has been any money allocated or if your department has looked at a way to allow the seniors to remain in their own homes and have . . . whether it be wheelchair ramps or whatever would make their life a lot more acceptable or living conditions at home.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There are two parts to the answer to that. One is the rural . . . the RRAP (residential rehabilitation assistance program), the repair . . . residential repairs assistance program, the federal money.

They had announced, the federal government had announced, in the budget a year ago that that program was ending and so we were preparing to wind it down. And then in December of 1995, they announced that there would be a continuation for one year.

So we don't know how long-lived it is. They just committed themselves to this year, that there would be \$50 million federally in that program, which works out to around two and a half million dollars for Saskatchewan.

We administer the program and people make application to us. And its purpose is for repairs, emergency repairs, and things like ramps and things to help people stay in their houses longer, to keep them in good repair.

And then we have a — we don't have money for it — but we do a facilitating function with other agencies for enriched housing for seniors or disabled people as part of the Sask

Housing activities.

Ms. Draude: — All the money for actually . . . Like the old RAPP program, that's actually still federal money then?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, that was a federal . . . Well it's a joint . . . It's their money — we administrate it.

Ms. Draude: — Is the administration part of it paid for by the federal government then?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The amount that the province contributes to it is about \$480,000 and it represents 25 per cent. So it's a 75/25 per cent split.

Ms. Draude: — With the housing out in rural Saskatchewan — I think it's called low income housing — is there a set policy on when appliances should be changed, or is that a local board decision? Appliances like stoves and fridge.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There is, with respect to appliances in the Sask Housing portfolio, there is a policy of a cycle of replacement of appliances. And our inspectors would know the condition. And the local housing authorities are encouraged to make those replacements on a cyclical basis so that we're not faced with a huge capital cost all at one time.

Ms. Draude: — Is the money that's allocated for this program, does that include the remuneration that's given to the local housing authority boards?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — For the payments . . . there are no payments to the local housing authorities. The people that serve on them serve as volunteers. And they make recommendations or requests for expenses from the portfolio, but they don't have any remuneration directly themselves.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Still on the same topic, Madam Minister, around rural housing, is there a construction policy still in force where a community can qualify for the construction of some homes, low rental or senior citizen or otherwise?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Unfortunately since 1993 when the federal government totally vacated their role in funding social housing, we just simply don't have money available for new housing programs. So the answer to your question would be no.

Mr. Krawetz: — It would be short and sweet. With that answer then and with no construction occurring, we know that there have been demographic shifts of population with many of the smaller communities.

There are communities that had a number of homes built 15 years ago, 10 years ago, and now the situation is occurring where another community has actual needs for those homes. Is there any consideration for moving some of the homes from one of the communities that now, as indicated by my colleague, is maybe having a vacancy problem and moving it to a community somewhere else where indeed there is a need for homes.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There are . . . I should say, when you talked about money for new housing, the only program that's been recently in operation is the remote housing program. And we had a really good example where we opened a development with 11 south-built houses. That was a federal-provincial initiative at Cumberland House just about a month ago. And there were also some homes in La Loche. But this is remote only, so there's no new money for anything else.

On the other front, where we have actively been moving houses, we've moved so far 77 from communities such as you described, where they were built at one time when there was a need, and for some reason the character of the community has changed, and they're vacant. And there's needs somewhere else, so we have actively moved 77 of them.

We have a protocol for negotiating with communities. We do it on a voluntary basis. And sometimes the local housing authority just doesn't want to believe that the houses are going to stay vacant. They always have hopes that the population is going to grow or whatever. So we work with the local housing authority until, well they agree after a certain length of vacancy; well you know, I guess you're right. We're not going to need this house any more. And then we move them to wherever it's economically feasible to someone that has a request.

And we have active negotiations now with approximately 20 communities where there is housing available to be moved. And that program will become probably more active in the near future.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm interested to hear that. The procedure that is followed then, has it been made clear to all housing authorities as to how they can apply for this relocation program, I guess, of homes? And my question would be then, is the authority, the local authority, then responsible for that moving cost if there are no monies for construction? Or is there a special levy, a special grant, I guess then, that would be available?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — For the moving costs and of course building a basement in a new location and so on, there is a pool of money that is available for that. And we have about 50 requests from about 50 southern — I'm talking, you know, anything other than northern and remote — communities who want relocated or new housing units.

So all communities are given the opportunity to address their chronic vacancy before houses are moved away. Like they may want to advertise and you know, try to keep the house. But if there's no response, then meetings take place with the housing authorities of the various communities, and it just . . . it's worked very well. It's just a good process of communication and it works itself out.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Just switching to another topic of provision of service and that service is policing service. Can you explain to me how the policing service outside the major cities is paid for; who pays for it, and what are the kind of grants that are available for policing outside the major cities?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well the first part of . . . or the last part of your question is really easy, that there isn't any money directly earmarked for policing or policing grants. The RCMP is the official police force for rural Saskatchewan. And for those communities that don't have their detachment . . . and as you know, you probably know, the population of 500 is the demarcation — any community above 500 is required to have policing. If they don't have a town police or their own local police force, they're required to contract with the RCMP.

And I think it's becoming more and more recognized . . . As you're probably aware, the RCMP did a presentation on their community police model at the SARM and SUMA conventions and spoke about the distribution of the cost of policing, because it really does . . . there's something really unfair where, say, a town of just over 500 might have to pay 60 to \$65,000 towards service from the RCMP, from a detachment that's not even in their town. They don't have any member of the force living actually in their town.

So they're paying, on a per capita base, maybe \$115 per person for this service while the rural municipalities all around them, and villages, of under 500 don't pay anything at all.

So I think it's inequity that at some point we're definitely going to have to address, because in some communities, this cost, if they're over 500, almost makes a difference as to whether the town is viable or not.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. When we look at the conditional aspect then of saying that a community of about 500 must have that policing service, it must either provide it locally, or it must contract with the RCMP, is there a provision within the revenue-sharing grant that says that if a community is obligated to provide that police force, is there any recognized expenditure for police costs?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The answer to your question is really no. Policing is not a cost that's recognized. I mean obviously part of the revenue sharing is unconditional. And if the community is required to have policing, if they're of that size, they could use some of that unconditional funding. But no, it's not recognized in the formula.

And our department, SUMA, SARM, and the Justice department, who are obviously responsible for the operations of the RCMP, are actively working to try and find some acceptable solution to this dilemma.

I know I was in two separate towns within just a day or two, where one of them was paying. They have a population 560; I won't name the town. But the population's 560, and they're required to contribute \$62,000 a year towards RCMP service, towards a detachment that's located about 30 miles away from their town. And they're actively trying to get people to move out so that the population will drop to under 500.

And then just a few miles away is another town, population 462, that is fortunate enough to have an RCMP detachment right in their town, but they don't have to contribute to it because of their population. And they're actively trying to keep

people from moving in because they don't want the population to go to more than 500.

So I mean this is an example of how unfair it is, really, to have some kind of an arbitrary cut-off that has such a dramatic effect whether you're on one side of it or the other.

(1630)

Mr. Krawetz: — You've spoken about urban centres. Do rural municipalities have contracts with the RCMP in terms of provision of police?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Rural municipalities, even if their population is over 500, are not bound by that same requirement as urban centres are. So there are some rural municipalities, a very small number now, I believe, who engage a police constable who, under The Police Act, has the status of a special constable.

And it's optional for rural municipalities. They can if they want to and some do, especially some that have resort areas within their borders or some particular non-rural situation where they feel that they need to have the regular services of the RCMP at some distant detachment supplemented. But it isn't common and there's no requirement for them to do so.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Madam Minister, I'd first of all like to sort of just cover some of the other questions they've asked for maybe some more information. The discussion that just took place on the funding for RCMP town pay and the RCMP rural, and some of those discrepancies. I guess my one question is, exactly how do you propose to address those inequities that I think we all agree are inequities?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well as I mentioned, that members of our department are working with SUMA and SARM and Justice to try to come up with some acceptable solution in order to address the inequities in funding. As you know, for example, the rural municipality of Corman Park that you're familiar with has, because . . . they're not required to have policing, because even though their population is much over 500 — it's closer to 8,000 — but they are a rural municipality so they're not required under The Police Act to provide policing services.

But because of the nature of the municipality, you know, all of the river banks and the recreational areas and the country residential, you know, cluster developments and so on, it's imperative that they supplement the services of the RCMP. But for many years now, over probably 25 years, they've had an in-house police force but there's never been any recognition of it in funding formulas. And the only thing they do get to keep is a portion — an ever-declining portion, I might add — of the fine revenue.

Mr. Heppner: — The question was asked a while back about what was happening with the attendance on the Western Development Museum — and I believe that includes a package of museums — and the answer was that the attendance is going up. Do you have a breakdown of what's happening specifically on the different museums, and which ones the attendance is

going up and which ones it's dropping?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We wouldn't have that kind of detail here but we certainly could provide that for you if you'd like to have it.

Mr. Heppner: — Moving on to a rather unhappy topic, but it's one that I've had some association with. From time to time municipal bodies run into a serious financial problem and your department has to sort of step in and make sure it sort of comes together. How many municipal bodies of Saskatchewan presently are in those sorts of financial straits where you sort of have to oversee them?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The response to that, about municipalities in financial distress, or administrative distress I guess, is that it's relatively very, very few — probably less than 10 at the current time. So I guess it's all part of that you and I are familiar with, that local governments cannot deficit budget and generally they're very responsible and very careful.

Mr. Heppner: — Good. That number's more reassuring than I was afraid it might be, so that was good to hear.

You're probably aware of the global estimate questions that our caucus sends to you, on a yearly basis, to your department. Do you have any idea when we're going to receive the answers to those particular set of global questions that we asked?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I was informed by my staff either this morning or yesterday I think, that work would be beginning on answering the questions I think as we speak.

Mr. Heppner: — You've made a number of comments recently, and the first word I want to use is amalgamations, but whether we use amalgamation or cooperation or sharing, whatever term we want to use of local governments, do you have a specific time frame in mind by which you would sort of like to see, whatever the process is called, come to an end and we can look at it and say we've accomplished whatever we set out to accomplish?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We don't have that kind of a plan at the moment. As we've said, we don't have a plan because we really do believe that these kind of decisions should be in the hands of local people, that they are in the best position to make those decisions.

But we have discussed with SUMA and SARM at our meeting on the agenda for our round-table meeting on the 26th, that we would like to develop a sort of a protocol for how we would approach some of the mechanical difficulties in the way of doing this.

Like, for example, in the case of a reversion of a very small urban community into the rural municipality, if it had, for instance, a leaky lagoon or a water treatment plant that needed fixing or an underground gas tank, who would be responsible, you know, for those liabilities?

And we have actually a number of municipalities who have

come voluntarily forward with a variety of different requests like, will you help us develop a plan to amalgamate? Like, will you help us with the formula that would bring our mill rates even, for example, if one municipality wants to amalgamate with one beside it and the mill rates are very different.

You will recall in Corman Park we had a 10-year equalization formula to bring the mill rates of the three municipalities even. And that kind of technical advice some people want.

So this isn't something that we're forcing on any municipalities, but we truly have had a number of them come forward and indicate their desire to change something about the way they operate. And we want to, with SUMA and SARM, have some collective way of approaching this so that if we respond to the requests of some of these municipalities, be they small, urban, or rural, that we'll be able to use that pattern, and others that may want to follow in the same path will see how the problems had been overcome.

So we would hope to, and I think it's the wish of the municipal organizations too, to proceed with this right away and maybe accomplish some of these in this calendar year before the fall, before the budgeting and administrative year of 1997 comes along. So there isn't really a set goal at the moment, but we want to work that out together. And if it's to be voluntary on the part of those local governments, then it's presumptuous for us to set a goal.

Mr. Heppner: — I'm aware, from the cooperation that has taken place presently between municipal bodies, that some of that has happened to some degrees. I'm aware of one particular community, and you sort of alluded to something like this, where the infrastructure of this community has basically just collapsed and they're asking an RM basically to take them over.

But they've become an ugly sibling and really no one wants them. Because the RM is saying, well we're going to have to do your lagoon and your water, plus we have possibly environmental costs because of the half a dozen service stations that used to exist there. And so they probably aren't willing to accept this ugly sibling unless there's some extra cash put into place to sort of help them along. Is your department prepared to work with them on a financial basis?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well so far we have in our budget for this year — I forget what we called it now — it's \$100,000 anyway. It's sort of transitional funding for that effort. But it's not meant to be . . . it's meant to be more organizational and not specifically to pick up liabilities. So those are the things, for instance, at the next round table we will be inviting representatives from the Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management to look at, because those liabilities, the plumbing and the underground storage tanks and so forth, are within their purview. And we'd like to involve them to try and work something out with respect to those liabilities.

Mr. Heppner: — I appreciate the fact that you're looking at those, because I think they present a real problem for some of the cooperations that people are trying to get going on.

You've intimated in various ways over the past couple of days that if municipalities don't start working together they may have some of their funding cut a little further. Is that statement correct? And if not, exactly what were you trying to get across with those statements?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well as I said yesterday, I was trying to be provocative, and it worked. But I think that what I was thinking out loud about was, I was reflecting on a suggestion that was made to me by a member of one of the municipal organizations. And we were talking about how much intermunicipal cooperation there is in so many parts of the province, and yet there do remain those parts of the province and those individual municipalities who don't have any sharing agreements with anyone.

And you can't legislate cooperation, but we were just discussing how can we encourage these people. How can we show them how easy it is to enter into these agreements and how much benefit there is in sharing equipment, be it road equipment or fire agreements or whatever? Is there some way?

And it was suggested to me that, well, you could say that every municipality in the province has to enter into three intermunicipal agreements during this year, or else they'll have their revenue sharing reduced. And I thought, well that gets about as close to legislating cooperation as you can possibly get. But it wasn't an idea that sprung from me; it was a suggestion that was made by someone else. So I just threw it out, and we haven't done any numbers on it, and we're not contemplating doing that.

But I think in these times of change that it's worthwhile to have these discussions and to throw out all kinds of different ideas. And who knows? I mean, we have to do things different ways. We all know that. And we need to adapt to the changing times.

And there's some things that . . . I mean, when you and I were young — or at least when I was — when I used to read in comic books about people going into space and Captain Marvel and all that stuff, I mean, it was like a fairy tale. And here we are; it's happening. And so some of these ideas that may seem farfetched at first blush may be the way we're going to go. But we need to listen to each other, and we need to talk about all these ideas. And that was one that somebody mentioned to me, and I thought it could have some currency.

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, I'm not sure if you're trying to goad me into saying what comics I read when I was young to guess my age, but I don't think that's going to work.

With your background in municipal affairs, I think this next question is something that you could relate to very well with the fact that there's been a downloading of responsibility onto the municipalities for a number of years, and the most recent is the \$20 million from municipalities for next year. And I guess both of us having had that kind of a background, how do you propose municipalities can absorb this kind of hit, you know, in the situation they're going to find themselves in? I must admit that personally I'm almost glad I'm not on municipal council at present.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well I would say to the member, I could tell you a funny little story about the reason I'm standing in my place in this House today . . . is while I did enjoy my work with local government very much, in the late '80s it was becoming highly exasperating — all of the cuts in revenue sharing that were occurring and the programs that were being cancelled. And I thought to myself, I'm going to get elected at that level, and I'm going to change all of that. So of course, it got worse instead of better. Eventually, you know, you get a touch of reality.

But this really represents 3 per cent of total municipal revenues. And as you and I both know, the contribution of the province through the revenue-sharing pool to various municipalities has a very disparate effect. I mean, in some municipalities it represents a major portion of their budget. To some municipalities it represents a very tiny amount, and if it were to disappear altogether, it would hardly make any difference to them.

So this is the other subject of the round table meeting on the 26th that we want to take up with the municipal organizations too . . . is how can we restructure the distribution formula for revenue sharing in such a way that it can be more fair because . . . I mean the formula is very complex now, but as the size of the pool continues to shrink as it has . . . It's less than half its size now of the highest level it was at, or close to half. The formula skews things in different directions.

The same as with the foundation grant for education — the first time that we reduced the size of the pool by 2 per cent, because of the provisions of the formula, it delivered a 10 per cent increase to some people, you know, and a 20 per cent decrease to others. It just was all over the map. So we want to talk to the municipal organizations about how we can make the distribution formula more sensitive to the municipalities that need help the most.

(1645)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You mentioned fairy tale a minute ago, Madam Minister, and I think — I know — the RMs are definitely hoping this \$20 million cut next year is part of a fairy tale, but I'm afraid it isn't.

Madam Minister, I have grave concerns as being a past reeve out there of what this \$20 million cut is going to do to people, especially in rural Saskatchewan. And I know everyone's affected, urban and rural both, but I know firsthand what the situation has been out there in rural Saskatchewan with our road systems. And in my estimation, the road systems have been deteriorating badly for the last few years with the extra traffic that has come on them and with the funding cuts we have already taken since.—well I won't even point the finger at you people across — in '91. They've started earlier through necessity or for whatever other reason.

I think that the thing I'm trying to get to you, Madam Minister, is that we've already had tremendous cuts out there, and some of our roads are 30-years-old-plus, some of our grid road systems, and they're not even close to being on our list now

because we've had to drop a lot back.

Has your department in any way studied what the \$20 million cut and the effect it will have on rural road system out there? Have you looked into that at all, what this is going to do to the roads in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Sorry I missed that profound remark. We haven't done any detailed study on it yet because it is a year away. And what the Finance minister said in the budget speech, and what is in fact the case, is the only decision that has been made is that the total size of the pool will be reduced by \$20 million even. It hasn't been decided how much will come out of the rural pool and how much out of the urban. Hasn't been decided how the distribution formula might be changed.

And I had a meeting this morning with the president and the executive director of SARM, following which they had a meeting with the Minister of Highways. And I know that they're trying to work out some comprehensive plan where rural councils can be involved with the Department of Highways in coming up with a plan where there would be local input to rationalize the road system in the province and to try to make sure that those arteries that are absolutely essential have the kind of maintenance that they need.

And we know that the road system has deteriorated. And the pressure that the changes in the transportation regime and the loss of the Crow and the changes in the grain industry moving towards the large concrete terminals and away from the small wooden elevators is going to have profound effects upon the transportation system in this province. It's a huge challenge for all of us.

So this is why we're involving the municipal organizations, the Department of Highways, and ourselves with respect to the future of revenue sharing in a concerted and consolidated effort to have a comprehensive look at how we can each play our part in maintaining the system that we need.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, I'm not sure if you possibly answered this in that or not. But I think maybe that was one of the questions I wanted to ask here . . . was the breakdown of what the urban part of the cuts will be, what the rural part of the cuts will be. What programs are going to be cut? Do we have any idea? Because I mean if we wait till next year to tell these people where these cuts are coming . . . I think what I'm saying is they're going to need time to adjust here because this is going to be a great adjustment after already being hit with all this downloading.

And they have to make an adjustment, and I would suggest that they only have really two ways to go. They either have to raise their mill rates which is totally unacceptable after they've worked hard to keep them where they are now, or they have to also cut services which we definitely can't afford with the way the traffic is changing.

So I guess the question is, have you got a breakdown of urban/rural? Where are these cuts going to hit?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I did address that in my previous responses, that this will be the subject of our communications at the round table with SUMA and SARM starting on the 26th . . . is that we want to talk about how will it affect rural and urban.

I mean, I'm sure they see that it should be *pro rata* in some way. But how can we also change the distribution formula so that people will be affected as little as possible or so that those communities that need the help . . . change it into more like an equalization formula?

And those are discussions that we will have starting before the end of this month because . . . well we did give a year's notice if you like, but time goes very quickly, and we know that they need to have answers to those questions at the earliest possible time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — When the hon. member beside me asked a question about amalgamation and that and agreements that are out there . . . possibly some RMs there have joined into three agreements. That would suffice to continue with their funding.

If you went that far, would that also include . . . Like, I know my home RM is already, I think, in three or four. They've done it voluntarily. And I think I've said this before. I think a number of RMs and towns are way ahead of the game here, and that's why I think I feel so strongly about forcing them in any way and using funding especially to do it.

Would that, if you're talking about . . . now are you talking about three agreements on top of what they already have, or would that suffice as what they've already been into? Because I know a number of RMs and towns already have a number of agreements.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — No, well actually what I was talking about, as I said, it was just a concept that was suggested to me, and, you know, I just repeated it, threw it out there for consideration. No detailed work has been done on that.

But I would assume . . . I think the intent of the person who suggested it to me was that it would be an effort to have each municipality be involved in at least three — not three new ones or three additional ones — but three because there are some municipalities out there who are not in service sharing or intermunicipal agreements of any kind, if you can believe it.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I would suggest, Madam Minister, that even by bringing the Act forward already, you've woke a lot of RMs up — if that was what your intention were to do — to get off their backs, get moving, and let's try and join services. As I said, many have already.

I think that's where we're at the point now, Madam Minister, and I think we've talked about it earlier in question period for a number of days. But I'm not sure that the legislation itself is even needed at this point because I think the wake-up call has got through, you know. And I'm not agreeing with the way it's been done, but I know many RMs and towns are already talking, well maybe there is ways we can do this.

And I think that's what I was saying earlier, that I think the need of the legislation right now . . . I would like to see it put on the back burner, and let's see what they do now on their own. If they do not respond to what you have tried here, then possibly two years down the road would be a fine time to bring it back and say, look I warned you. You wouldn't do it; here it is. I would hope that you give these municipalities of all sizes and kinds, urban and rural, a chance now to show you what they can do. They've had the wake-up call. Let's give them that two years.

So I hope that suggestion would be taken seriously because I know my experiences with the RM out there is I know we were already doing it, and maybe there was more things we could do. But I think you've scared them fairly deeply now, and if that was what you intended to do, that's fine. I would hope we would not force it any farther.

One thing I would like to touch on, Madam Minister, is . . . I know in our home RM we are running out of gravel, and I think there's a number of other RMs that are running out of gravel too. And it's a tremendous expense. I know at home it's just sky-rocketed.

Is there any plans anywhere within your department to assist, number one, RMs in finding gravel and, number two, to assist these RMs that are caught where . . . I know in our case, we're going to be hauling gravel 40 to 50 miles in the near future, if we can find it. And the cost is sky-rocketing. So is there anything in the works to help find gravel and, number two, fund it, when you do find it, extra and above what we already are being funded?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We don't have any plans in place along those lines at the moment. I recognize the problem. But it's not Municipal Government; it would be the Department of Highways that generally, over the province, does the acquisition of pits and gravel rights and does the locating. And then often, as you know, then they allow rural municipalities to have access to those supplies. But it is a serious problem.

I know that work is being done by the Research Council and others in alternate materials for road building and that sort of thing. And you know, surely if we can put a man on the moon, we can figure out some more economical way to build roads.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

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