

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of concerned citizens from the province of Saskatchewan with respect to 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 signatures on the petition besides being from Regina are also from Yorkton, Kiseby, Kipling, and many other small communities in southern Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise, Mr. Speaker, 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 names are from numerous southern Saskatchewan communities plus the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Pilot Butte, Carlyle, and throughout Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

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

The people that have signed this petition are from the city of Regina.

Ms. Draude: — 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 are from Regina, but also from Lampman, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Weyburn, Bienfait, all over southern Saskatchewan.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed pretty much by the people of Arm River and specifically from the community of Eyebrow.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre, and 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.

This does truly represent a cross-section of Saskatchewan when we start out with regions in the east with Moosomin, Broadview, Wapella represented here; Rocanville, White City, Regina, Moose Jaw, and then all the way across to in my constituency with the town of Herbert, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, they're from Regina here; there are many of them from Indian Head, a neighbouring community here; and there's also one from Manitoba, I believe, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to present this to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues today — day 45 — the 45th time I've been with my colleagues to present petitions on behalf of the Plains Health Centre in trying to save its existence. 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.

Mr. Speaker, I see a lot of the people that have signed this

petition are actually from out of province — Toronto, some from B.C. (British Columbia) — but obviously many from Regina, and in particular, Regina Dewdney, Elphinstone, Regina Albert South. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The province of Saskatchewan has been honoured by a visit by His Excellency Anthony Goodenough, High Commissioner of Britain, and his wife Veronica. I would ask them to stand if they will, to be introduced. And Mr. Patrick Holdich as well who's with them. I'd ask the Assembly to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — After a distinguished career in the foreign affairs with the British government, Mr. Goodenough is now the high commissioner to Canada. It's the first time he's been in the commission in Canada and he tells me it's his first time ever in Saskatchewan, so we are honoured indeed.

I assured, when I met with the high commissioner this morning, His Excellency this morning, I assured him this is the way the weather always is — this is a very typical day in this province.

Our trade relations with Britain are important, as of course are our cultural ties, and we seek to strengthen these. We are very pleased that Mr. Goodenough and his wife and associate were able to come, and we look forward to return visits to the province by them.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to once again reiterate a welcome to His Excellency, with whom I had the pleasure of meeting this morning. On behalf of the official opposition, welcome, and thank you for coming to visit our great province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, joining the Leader of the Opposition and the government members, would like to welcome the high commissioner and his wife and the other people accompanying him to the legislature here this afternoon.

I look forward to our visit later this afternoon, and discuss the various issues that may be of interest to the country of Great Britain and certainly Canada. So we look forward to that later this afternoon, and we would add our voice of welcome to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a group of 57 students who are seated in your west gallery. These are grade 6, 7, and 8 students from Peart School in my constituency. They're accompanied by their teacher, Bruce Baldwin, among others.

And I look forward to meeting with this group after the question period and to answer any questions that they may have. And I look very much forward to that visit. And I would ask the members to make these students feel very welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly and ask you to make them welcome, a group of 32 students from the Cowessess School on the Cowessess Reserve, grade 4 and 5 students who are in the east gallery. They're attended by their teachers, Ms. Sayer and Mrs. Bear; chaperons Susan Gunn, John Denis Lerat, and Curtin Agecutay. I hope I've got that name correct.

And I look forward to visiting with this group after question period for some pictures and just a photo opportunity, and a time of question and answers as well. Welcome them, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, a group of seniors from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Saskatoon. I'm especially pleased to introduce them because my parents are with them, but also my godparents, my aunt and uncle, Curtis and Gertrude Satre, from Irma, Alberta. I'd like you all to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I'd like to also welcome all the students that are visiting here today, and especially the students from Cowessess School. As a native member of the House, it's always nice to see native people come in and watch the proceedings. And I encourage all the students up there to continue on with their education. Again on behalf of the Liberal caucus, we welcome you and we ask the Assembly to join me in also welcoming them. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and members of the Assembly, two special friends from Saskatoon who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These individuals farmed south of Shaunavon for many years and retired in Saskatoon, but I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Aadland to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health Week in Saskatchewan

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to recognize Mental Health Week in Saskatchewan which begins today. I would like to share with you its theme: Open Mind: A New Attitude on Mental Health. Stop Stigma.

We must constantly challenge ourselves to fight against stigma and public misunderstanding about mental disorders. The future well-being and quality of life of persons with mental illness depends on our ability to change attitudes towards mental illness. This is critical because the stigma attached to mental illness discourages people from seeking help.

Only one in five people with a mental illness seek professional help. Sometimes it seems there's nothing we can do. But this is a case where we all can help. Sensitivity and empathy on the part of us all can go a long way to understanding mental illness and ending the fear of stigma.

This in turn will encourage people to seek the services that will help them overcome or manage their illness. It is up to all of us to show sensitivity to those with mental illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize this week's designation as Mental Health Week. In fact psychiatric and emotional disorders are more common in Saskatchewan than anywhere in Canada, affecting about 28 per cent of Saskatchewan people every year.

Activities and public events planned for Mental Health Week are designed to fight the stereotypes that are often attached to people who suffer mental health problems. This negative view of mental illness can add to the problem by lowering one's self-esteem.

By raising the profile of mental illness, hopefully more people will become aware of, understand, and respect, the challenges that face many people with mental illness.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to just comment on the recognition of mental illness in our province on behalf of our caucus. And certainly indicate, Mr. Speaker, that it's important that each one of us as individuals recognize the other person around us and those, especially those, that we're acknowledging this week — individuals suffering from mental illness.

As we've heard by the government member and the Liberal opposition, for too many years we have basically put these people in the back rooms, if you will, or behind closed doors and haven't recognized the problem for what it is; and the fact that as individuals if we would reach out and give them a loving, warm hug, at many times we could help many people combat and fight this problem that people in our society face.

So it's certainly fitting that we take this time to recognize the problems of mental illness and give the encouragement that's needed to reach out to combat this problem at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Forest Week

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, this week is National Forest Week. The Saskatchewan forest is important, and not only to my constituency but the entire province. Our forests enhance the environment, provide habitat for wildlife, produce the air we breathe, and add beauty to the overall province.

Forest is one of the driving forces in our province's economy. Almost 8,000 jobs depend upon the forest industry which contribute \$635 million to the Saskatchewan economy annually. As well, other forest-based activities, including such things as recreational fishing, trapping, and hunting, are carried on in the forest.

As part of the National Forest Week, the Saskatchewan Forestry Association has organized Tree Trek to encourage the understanding of our forests. The money raised by this activity is used to maintain the association's interpretive trails in Saskatchewan.

The general public is invited to hike along the well-marked trails. Participants will be collecting pledges as they take part in the Tree Trek. Our forests provide an important resource that contributes to the quality of our life. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Safety Colouring Book Available

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A farm has the potential for many accidents and teaching children safety about the farm is extremely important. Donna Prosko, a constituent from Rose Valley, is promoting farm safety to children 12 and under through a new colouring book. The 30-page book is called *Farming Today with Fun and Safety*. This book takes children through the seasons of farming. About 18 farm safety rules are included to help remind the children and parents how important safety is.

Donna began this project when she wanted to teach her own three children as much as possible about farm safety and found there is little information on it for the modern version of how a farm operates in the '90s. Donna gathered stickers, a farm video, and an activity book that she used to do a farm safety walkabout on her farm. Then she made a presentation to her son's classmates and was surprised in the amount of interest they showed. They wanted to learn about machinery, crops, nature, and the environment.

Last spring she decided to go ahead with publishing a book, and so far she has sold over 2,500 copies across western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this Assembly to join me in commending Donna Prosko for seeing the need and taking the initiative to promote farm safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Learning Grounds Project

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday approximately 250 people in the Whitmore Park neighbourhood of Regina came together to start working on a very special ecological and educational project.

The project at St. Matthew School in my constituency will turn the school yard back into a more natural environment that can be enjoyed by students, and used for many hands-on outdoor educational opportunities. As such, it's been dubbed a "learning grounds" project, as it will turn the school ground into an environmental and educational experience and encourage healthy environmental attitudes while promoting physical and psychological health.

St. Matthew School is leading the way with this project, as it is the very first of its kind in our province. It's also a true community project, since it involves the resources of the community, University of Regina, the school's PTA (parent teacher association), hundreds of individual parents, teachers, and students.

The students have been involved from the start in the development, design, and construction of the project, that will include new marshlands project, planting many indigenous Saskatchewan plants, and a natural prairie area. They'll also be involved in the care and maintenance after the project is complete.

Mr. Speaker, this project reflects a strong commitment to the environment. I'd like to congratulate St. Matthew School and the many people involved in this worthwhile project, including the principal, Aline Wilkie, Regina Separate School Board, Sask Ed, the Learning Through Landscapes Foundation, U of R (University of Regina), and Environment Canada.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lumsden and Craven Seniors' Program

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to recognize the initiative of the progressive community of Lumsden in my constituency, and today I would like to pay tribute to the people involved in a program responsible for helping seniors.

I am referring to the Lumsden and Craven seniors' program. On March 13 they held their annual meeting at Lumsden Manor. Through this program seniors receive valuable services such as transportation and help with household chores. The group is also looking at adding to the list of services that are currently offered.

The Lumsden Lions Club has donated \$1,000 towards the operation of the program for 1996, and the Craven Elks have agreed to match this donation. The Regina Health District has also helped offset some costs for the programs.

By the middle of March some 20 people had signed up for this program which is in need of additional volunteers. I would like to congratulate Kathy Reimer, who is the program coordinator, and all of the volunteers who are contributing to the quality of life for our seniors.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 16 the very first Saskatchewan Achievement in Business Excellence Awards will be presented at the Centennial Auditorium in Saskatoon. As many as 31 businesses could receive an award in various categories.

Meanwhile the SABEX (Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence) Hall of Fame Awards will go to the Buckwold groups of companies, and posthumously to Joe Leier, the former owner of the Sheraton Cavalier.

Harry Buckwold started his dry goods operations in 1925, and in the 1950s Sidney and Seymour Buckwold expanded it into the wholesale flooring distribution. Today the company has distribution centres in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, as well as Regina and Saskatoon.

Bruce and Richard Buckwold are currently the managers of this long-standing, successful Saskatoon family business.

The second recipient of the Hall of Fame Award, Mr. Speaker, goes to the late Joe Leier. Not only did Joe Leier own the Saskatoon Sheraton Cavalier, but he also owned the Sheraton Cavalier in Calgary and the Prince Albert Marlboro Inn.

Mr. Leier was known for his contributions to charity. In 1991, the year prior to his death, he received the B'nai B'rith Humanitarian Award. He was the first person in Saskatchewan to receive this honour.

I commend the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority and the chamber of commerce for encouraging and supporting business achievements with these awards, and congratulations to all the businesses that have been nominated. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. The concern surrounding

the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement is not going away. In fact it is growing stronger every day. This NDP (New Democratic Party) government refuses to deal with the problem that they — and only they — have created. They have repeatedly heard the pleas from the Saskatchewan Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the school boards, and municipalities, but they blatantly refuse to do anything.

Construction firms belonging to the SCA (Saskatchewan Construction Association) have boycotted bidding on jobs that are subject to the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement). Mr. Speaker, this is hurting construction firms. It is detrimental to job creation and it is significantly costing taxpayers more money. It is harming our economy. Saskatchewan needs jobs and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Labour finally admit that the CCTA is not a fair and open tendering policy and will he commit to tearing up this agreement today?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I would inform the Assembly in regard to the hon. member's question that meetings as late as today have taken place between the Crown Investments Corporation and the Saskatchewan Construction Association. I believe we're making progress. We want a harmonious relationship with all the parties involved in the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, and I believe that we'll achieve that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — These meetings, Mr. Speaker, must come as quite a shock to the SCA because I was talking to him just before lunch and he still hadn't been in attendance at one.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan deserve an apology and this NDP government owes it to the public to tear up this agreement. In a recent publication — and I'll send a copy to the minister — by the Merit construction contractors entitled, "Saskatchewan NDP Rewarding their friends," current chairman Brent Waldo said, and I quote:

"There are really two sets of rules for construction in Saskatchewan," . . . "One for the unionized shops and one for the rest of us. Unfortunately, our set of rules keeps us from competing and could end up hurting our industry in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of construction workers have chosen not to belong to a union. This agreement has a serious impact on these workers. Will the Minister of Labour admit that the CCTA is devastating the construction industry by giving a bidding advantage to unionized contractors over those contractors whose employees have chosen freely not to join a union?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No, I'll not admit that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, this NDP government attempted to justify CCTA when it was first implemented, by claiming the goal was to establish fair wages. This has not been the result. The result has been local construction contractors refusing to bid on jobs. That hurts the firm, the firm's employees, the corporation receiving the work, and the taxpayers, because bids aren't based on the lowest qualified bidder. The sole reason for all these problems is the CCTA.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a fair wage policy. The contractors aren't opposed to a fair wage policy, but they're opposed to the CCTA. Will the minister, in attempting to rectify these problems, admit to immediate, true dialogue with the SCA?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — As I informed the Assembly earlier, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that as late as today a meeting is taking place between the Saskatchewan Construction Association and the Crown Investments Corporations. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are again for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, on Friday I tried to get answers for the people of Fort Qu'Appelle and for the Touchwood File Hills Tribal Council regarding Fort Qu'Appelle's hospital. All I got back was the same political rhetoric and nonsense we've come to be used to from these ministers. But I'll try again, Mr. Speaker. There is a crisis developing in Fort Qu'Appelle with threats of lawsuits because of broken agreements with the tribal council.

My question to the minister in charge of what's left of our health care system is this: will he step in and ensure that promised level of funding is restored to Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital, or is he willing to continue to ignore the situation and let the situation turn uglier than it already is? Yes or no, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to be the minister in charge of the wonderful health system that we have in this province, and I want to say, which people across North America consider to be a very enviable health system I might add, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say the member that the district health board in the area that that member represents in the legislature, is responsible for making decisions about operating funding throughout the district and as between various institutions in the district. That is a decision that is made locally, not by the Department of Health, not by myself as minister.

And when the member gets up and talks about a crisis which is

a dispute between the Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital and the district over how much how much money the hospital should get, he's not attacking me or the department or the government, Mr. Speaker, he's attacking the local district, the people from his own area that are responsible for allocating health care dollars.

With respect to that issue, Mr. Speaker, I understand the district is carrying out an operational review. I have every confidence that the district and the tribal council and the hospital will arrive at a sensible arrangement, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try once again to give the minister another opportunity to give a straight answer.

Mr. Minister, the Touchwood File Hills Tribal Council signed an agreement in good faith with your government when it agreed to join the health district. Now, Mr. Minister, that agreement is broken due to your own lack of commitment and faith to the people of Fort Qu'Appelle and the tribal council. We see more workers laid off and doubts cast upon the promised and much-needed new facility in Fort Qu'Appelle.

I ask the minister what he is willing to do, beyond blaming others, to straighten out this ludicrous situation we see developing in Fort Qu'Appelle. Will you live up to your commitment, Mr. Minister? Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not me who is blaming others; it is the member over there.

And what I am saying to the member is, let the district and let the Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Hospital and the tribal council negotiate and resolve their differences. It is not the place of the Minister of Health to get involved every time there is a dispute between a local facility and the district health board which must make decisions about funding in the district.

But while the member is saying that he wants definitive answers, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member this question: is the member and his party . . . are they going to support The Health Facilities Licensing Act to keep our medicare system a public, single-tiered system?

The member says he wants straight answers from me. He's got them. Now I'd like a straight answer from that party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Personal Care Home Regulations

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions as well are to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan seniors and their families have been waiting for your government to bring forward regulations for personal care homes for more than 10 individuals.

The former Health minister promised these regs would be released by December of 1994. And then on the eve of the election, the Health minister sent out a news release on this very issue and promised regulations would be in place by May 1995. Well it's May 1996 and there are still no regulations in place.

Mr. Minister, there is no good reason why these regulations should take up to two years to release. What is the hold-up? Why is it taking so long to bring these regulations forward?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I can advise the member, Mr. Speaker, that the regulations will be released within the next two weeks. So they will be released in a very short space of time.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard that promise before. In fact we've gone through it three or four times in this Assembly. One of the main problems with your health government's reform . . . or your government's health reform is that you cut and slash health services and beds with no alternatives in place, and this is just another example. I'm looking forward to hearing whether or not that promise comes forward in the next two weeks.

And, Mr. Minister, it's important that it be brought forward for . . . A couple of examples. Just last week Souris Valley extended care lost 20 beds because of lack of funds, leaving 20 seniors with nowhere to turn. And the Eaglestone seniors' lodge in Kamsack is on the verge of closing altogether, again leaving many seniors with no home. This week we hear that the North Central Health District is announcing the closure of another 30 beds in Melfort that will affect many seniors who need care. This is happening all across the province and all you have to do is bring forward the regulations.

Mr. Minister, you have just indicated that within two weeks you will be bringing forward those regulations. Will you make a firm commitment, Mr. Minister, this afternoon that those regulations will indeed be brought forward within the next two weeks? Or is this just another political ploy?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I already have answered the question, Mr. Speaker, and . . . But I want to say to the member that there's an article in *The Globe and Mail* today talking about health reform in Saskatchewan, and I would encourage the member to read it, because one of the things it points out is that we're moving in a very proactive and positive way to provide creative housing alternatives and living alternatives, including enhanced home care, to seniors so that they can live independently in the community. And I think what is happening, Mr. Speaker, is actually quite positive.

But while we're getting commitments, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask that member from that party whether his party too would support The Health Facilities Licensing Act and thereby support legislation which will safeguard the public medicare system that we enjoy in our province. I'd like a commitment from the member as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for the Arts

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Madam Minister, you are now saying that you want the arts community to do more to justify the money it gets from Saskatchewan taxpayers. You also said your government will be looking at taxpayer-funded Saskatchewan Arts Board and deciding whether there's still support.

I'm glad to see you're finally coming around on this particular issue, Madam Minister. I'm wondering if you could explain these comments in greater detail. Madam Minister, what changes are you planning to make to the arts funding, and what changes are you planning to make to the Saskatchewan Arts Board to make it more accountable for the \$3.6 million a year it receives from Saskatchewan taxpayers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to answer that question from the member opposite. And I would suggest that at the arts forum which was held in Saskatoon, which is a mere half-hour's drive away from the where the member opposite who raises the question lives, that if he had attended the forum and listened to the presentations, listened to the address I made and the spirited question and answer period, Mr. Speaker, which followed, instead of relying on a press report from this morning's newspaper which rather doesn't reflect what the situation was or what I said correctly, that he would be much better served, Mr. Speaker, and he would have the answer then to his own question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the madam minister had an opportunity to get involved in some spirited answers, because I'm sure the questions were very pointed.

Your own budget consultation process showed that arts funding has one of the lowest priorities of Saskatchewan taxpayers, yet within your own department your priorities did not reflect that at all. Arts funding was cut by less than 3 per cent while funding to municipalities cut by 25 per cent.

Madam Minister, I completely agree that artists should do more to justify the money they receive. In fact many artists completely justify the money they receive by creating their art and then selling it without any help from government.

Madam Minister, if people like what an artist is producing, they'll buy the art. If they don't, taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize it.

Madam Minister, if you want to make the arts community more accountable, why don't you simply end taxpayer-funded grants to individual artists and let the artists sell their products in the market-place just like everyone else who produces a product or supplies a service.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I would say this about the figures that the member opposite uses, in that the reductions to the Arts Board funding in the context of our whole fiscal situation since the year 1992 have totalled 10 per cent; they're not 10 per cent in this year. In this year, they're about . . . just around 3 per cent; whereas the cut to municipalities doesn't even take effect till next year. So he should get his arithmetic straight to begin with.

In the second place, Mr. Speaker, we are reflecting in our budget the priorities of Saskatchewan people when they say they do not have a high awareness of the arts community, in that our funding of some \$3 million directly to the Arts Board represents less than one-tenth of 1 per cent of all government spending.

Now if that isn't already reflecting the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan, I don't know how low it would have to go.

I want to say further that I think that it is no accident that our free-standing Arts Board that has existed for 50 years has resulted in the creativity being developed to the point where we have artists of every medium . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Seniors' Eye Care Costs

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services.

I recently received a call from a 73-year-old widow who desperately needed a new pair of glasses but cannot afford them. Her total income is \$812 per month, and this money goes toward clothing, shelter, food, and medication.

This woman called the departments of Health and Social Services, as did I, and was told that this government has nothing in place for low income seniors to cover the cost of glasses. In fact the Department of Social Services told me that in order for her to get funding for new glasses, she would have to go on social assistance.

Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan seniors are proud people. They have contributed a great deal to this province. They do not want to be a burden on their fellow citizens. However, they need and deserve respect and should receive help to meet their needs when necessary.

Mr. Minister, what will you do today to ensure that people are not forced into social service lines so that their basic safety needs such as glasses are met?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as always, I will take the member's concern and individual case under advisement. I again would invite her, when she has individual cases, to contact me, to call me to discuss these issues in the House, Mr. Speaker. We have discovered in other experiences of this member and of her caucus, when issues have been raised in this House, that some of the fact that is brought to the House is not accurate, Mr. Speaker.

Now to address the member's issues. We are of course concerned, this government — I'm certain all Saskatchewan people are concerned — about sharing to those who need our assistance in our communities, Mr. Speaker. That's a fundamental principle of this government. It's reflected in this budget, Mr. Speaker, where we have back-filled every federal dollar taken from social services 100 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, when this NDP government came into power, one of the first things that it did was to take away supplementary health coverage for low income earners. This woman that I have spoken to is just one of many Saskatchewan seniors who call me. Many of them have also been told by your department that their best bet is to go on social assistance.

When this government proposed its new welfare reform plan, it said it was aiming to reducing welfare rolls. If the minister believes in this government's welfare reform plan, why is the government encouraging more people to apply for social assistance in order to get essential health services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to deal with these important issues in the House when the member from Humboldt and others bring misinformation into the debate.

Now where the member from Humboldt suggests that we have eliminated supplemental health benefits is simply not the case, Mr. Speaker. It is a sign of what appears to be a growing disarray of the information coming from that caucus.

Again I say — again I say, Mr. Speaker — when the member has an individual concern, I plead with her to bring those concerns to my attention. I plead with her, secondly, to bring accurate information into this House.

And third, if I may, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on feet, again I plead with that caucus to join with us and join with the rest of Saskatchewan in focusing some attention on their federal Liberal cousins as their federal Liberal cousins walk away from social programing across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Surgical Waiting-lists

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has brought to the attention of this House a number of examples that demonstrate the ever-widening cracks in the health care system.

The minister has responded with statements such as, and I quote:

When people need to get into the hospital for emergency surgery, they quite routinely do. This happens every single day.

I would encourage the minister to read a letter — and I'll send copies over to the cabinet members so they can follow along here today — from Mr. John Ballantyne, a Saskatoon resident who ruptured a disc in his back and was forced to endure two months of torture before having an operation that lasted less than one hour. In this letter, Mr. Ballantyne states and I quote:

Your policies must change to deal with the serious cases like mine in a more compassionate and common sense way.

Will the minister explain when he and his government will acknowledge and begin addressing the fact that the current health care system is not compassionate, or common sense, or meeting the needs of Saskatchewan residents.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, when I . . . I am sympathetic to somebody who's on a waiting-list. But waiting-lists are nothing new in the province, and waiting-lists exist in every province in Canada. And actually our province fares fairly well. But when I hear a question like that, Mr. Speaker, I must say it's not a surprise to hear in the media today, that that party is now in third place in the polling of political preferences in Saskatchewan.

But I want to tell the member and the House, that notwithstanding the gloom and doom and reports of people who have waited to get into . . . for elective surgery, that we hear day after day from the Liberal Party, most people who deal with the health care system are very, very happy with the treatment they get, Mr. Speaker. And I meet people every day who say, you know, we have a very good medicare system. We want to keep our medicare system and keep up the good work in terms of trying to keep a one-tiered system instead of the American-style medicare that those members are advocating.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's quite a quote from some of his colleagues that he's referring to.

Mr. Speaker, during the two months that Mr. Ballantyne waited for surgery he had to take morphine and other pain-numbing drugs in increasing quantities; and he writes and you'll follow along:

Sometimes I did not know what drug I'd taken or how much or when.

Finally, two days before his surgery, Mr. Ballantyne was admitted to hospital because pain had escalated his blood pressure to a dangerously high level. Mr. Speaker, these are the kind of stories one hears about when examining third world countries, not Canada, and surely not Saskatchewan.

Will the minister explain why his government has chipped away at our health care system leaving us with a system that in many ways resembles what one might find in a third world country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, I'm sorry that that gentleman had to wait two months for his surgery, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say that for elective surgery that is not uncommon in Saskatchewan or any other province. And in fact our record is probably better than most other provinces.

And the number of elective surgeries actually over the last 10 years has gone up quite considerably, Mr. Speaker, and more surgeries are being done, because of day surgery and shorter hospital stays, than have ever been done before. But the complaint about waiting for surgery is a political football that is tossed around by successive oppositions in governments for the last 30 years.

But I want to say to the member from the Liberal Party that I think strike one in this whole medicare debate was when they would not object to the federal Liberals taking \$50 million out of medicare. I think strike two was when they started advocating an American-style medicare system; and strike three came last week when the member from Arm River said that their position was in support of a two-tiered system where you pay for your medical services.

I say, strike three and you're out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the member can talk about strike one, two, and three all he wants. Saskatchewan is not even in the ball game in health care any longer.

Mr. Speaker, surgery has relieved much of Mr. Ballantyne's pain. However the long wait he endured resulted in a number of problems. His health deteriorated, his family encountered thousands of dollars in bills, his business lost about one-third of its contracts. Mr. Speaker, the truly unfortunate part of this is the fact that it is the typical way in which people are being treated under the current NDP version of health care. As Mr. Ballantyne so aptly puts it in his correspondence:

I do not think that what we went through can ever be justified in our society.

Mr. Minister, can you justify what Mr. Ballantyne and his family, and in fact what many others go through, in the name of NDP cost-effective health care system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the information I have, Mr. Speaker, is that Mr. Ballantyne received his surgery on February 3 and he was not on a waiting-list for months and months. That's the information I have. And I think that's consistent with what the member says.

But I will say this to the member, that in our health care system everybody should be treated the same and should be categorized on the basis of whether they are a case of urgency, emergency, or elective surgery. That is a decision for the medical people to make, Mr. Speaker. There may be room for some improvement in our system, better coordination. I think

the . . . actually the district health board model gives us some hope to do that.

But at least in our system, Mr. Speaker, we're all going to be treated the same way and our surgery is going to be based upon medical criteria, not the criteria that involves how much money we have in our wallet — which last week is what the member from Arm River said should be the criteria for deciding when we get our surgery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 83 — An Act to amend The Limitation of Actions Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Limitation of Actions Amendment Act, 1996 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.

The Speaker: — Order. And I'm going to ask for the cooperation of all members when the Speaker is on his feet, to maintain order in the House, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Keeping with our policy of being an open and accessible government, I table the answer to 84.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The answer to question 84 is tabled.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And we're able to table the answer to no. 85, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 85 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 47 — An Act to amend The Agri-Food Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I'll be moving second reading of The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1996.

Mr. Speaker, Agri-Food Act was passed in 1990 to provide new options for the establishment of producer-operated research and development funds through producer-elected boards and commissions. The Act was consistent with the desire to encourage producers to take a more direct role in their industry development.

It has recently been determined that The Agri-Food Act is unclear regarding the reporting and accountability requirements ensuring that producers' elected boards operate in the best interest of their industry as well as the public. And, Mr. Speaker, producers' elected boards are primarily responsible to producers through the democratic structures and reporting requirements provided in regulations.

The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1996 is being proposed to clarify accountability. Mr. Speaker, producers' elected boards should be held directly responsible for their actions because they are chosen by producers to perform work on behalf of the producers with producer dollars. Producers themselves are the best ones to decide if their check-off research and development dollars are being administered wisely.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's with that note that I ask members of the Assembly to support these amendments, and therefore I move the second reading of a Bill, The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have a few moments today to discuss the proposed amendments to The Agri-Food Act.

Due to the fact that the agriculture and food industry is the backbone of our economy, it is only right that considerable time be given to debate any changes to legislation that will affect this industry.

The amendments to this Act do a variety of things including: altering the definition of marketing; classifying responsibilities of producer-elected boards under the Act; permitting councils to extend reporting periods; clarifying that producer-elected agencies may select their own auditors; as well as permitting government to make regulations that will modify the powers of the supervisory council.

This is all fine and good, but it is my opinion that this government should be spending more time following through on the promises made in the *Agriculture 2000* document before it goes on to make further amendments to this Act.

In 1993 this NDP government came out with a document similar to the current *Partnership for Growth* document. *Agriculture 2000 — A Strategic Direction for the Future of Saskatchewan's Agricultural and Food Industry* was initiated as a way to promote prosperity in the agricultural sector of our economy.

It is almost three years later and where are we? Have any of the proposals initiated in the *Agriculture 2000* document been fulfilled? Are there any current plans to follow through on them?

This government has spent the first session of their second term bringing forth all sorts of legislative changes and amendments while forgetting what kind of promises they made in their previous term.

This government may be short of memory when it comes to promises that they made, but the people of this province remember very clearly what was promised to them. Getting caught in the trees when shooting for the stars when it comes to fulfilling promises may wash in the cities, but there is no reason for getting caught in the trees out on the prairies in the middle of a wheat field. And that's what's happened to the *Agriculture 2000* document.

Agriculture 2000 was supposed to improve the lives of all Saskatchewan people by continuing to develop an economically and environmentally sustainable industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is three years later. The number of child poverty cases is up. The number of rural and urban people relying on food banks is up. Yet this government continues to say that Saskatchewan people are more economically sound and prosperous than ever.

It is due time that this government opens its eyes. Take a walk through rural Saskatchewan and see what the people out there really want and really need.

There were three main objectives behind *Agriculture 2000* in an effort to improve the lives of all Saskatchewan people. They were, first, to provide the opportunity for farm families to manage their land, control their future, and be economically successful. Number two, to diversify the agriculture and food sector and add value to our agricultural products. And thirdly, to promote production, marketing, research, education, and training institutions which contribute to the development of family farms, diversification, and value added products.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this government how they expect the farmers who received multi-thousand dollar GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) bills to become and remain economically successful.

I would also like to ask what has been done over the past three years to promote these educational and training institutions. One of the key areas of discussion with regards to *Agriculture 2000* was to provide:

... support systems for family farms under emotional and mental stress due to financial difficulties.

Is it safe to assume that the money being received from these GRIP bills will go towards the implementation of such a program?

In 1993 value added processing was a key phrase that promised great things for the farming people of this province. In 1993 this government promised to create a favourable climate for the expansion of intensive cattle and hog operations. Well this has been done to some extent, even if it's only been by moving jobs from one part of this province to the other or potentially from one province to the other. There was also mention of strategies to promote the dairy and poultry industries. It would be great to see if this actually happens.

From my point of view, this Bill intrinsically related to the agriculture and food sector of Saskatchewan goes out of its way to ignore the real issues at hand. Yes, this Bill does clarify steps

that producer-elected boards must take when reporting and accounting for research and development funds, but I feel that the real issue should be research and development and not the glossy document that it is written on.

How is this province going about diversifying our crops and food industry? What programs are in place to promote diversification? How available is this information? Why are we wasting time deciding how many people are elected to producer-elected boards when we really should be concentrating on the possible profitability of the agri-food industry in this province.

The stability of the agricultural industry in this province is always in question. There are no guarantees when it comes to weather and prices. The government obviously sees this. Instead of supporting this industry fully, it is making amendments to The Agri-Food Act in order to remove responsibilities and lessen liability when it comes to producer-elected boards.

Through this Bill, the Minister of Agriculture and Food is trying to download responsibility onto the backs of local bodies. We have heard time and time again this government complain about federal downloading, and now this government is the one who's going out full force to download its responsibilities.

With the passage of this Bill into law, these producer-elected boards will no longer be accountable to the public. What is the reason for this? Do the people of this province not deserve an elected body that is accountable for its actions? This needs to be looked into more closely before we can take a stand on it.

Shortly after this Bill was first tabled in this House, the minister responsible for Agriculture and Food announced the Saskatchewan vegetable producers have voted in favour of removing levy powers of these producers. This wish will be followed up on changes being made to the regulations of The Agri-Food Act. This brings to question what other changes to this Act that the government plans to make through amendment to regulations. I guess we'll have to wait and see what else this government has in store for the agricultural industry of Saskatchewan.

In 1993 this government saw that the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan was changing. This government acknowledged in the *Agriculture 2000* document that, quote:

The future of Saskatchewan agriculture will depend upon international markets, domestic policy and the ability of the people who make up the industry, to adjust and adapt.

While it is clear that the Minister of Agriculture has been working on improving trade on the international scale — we see this as he has just come back from a trade mission to the Pacific Rim — we also see that the people involved in the agricultural industry in this province are able to adjust and change. This can be seen by looking at the growing number of farmers diversifying their crops and going into raising specialty livestock.

Now it is this government's turn to work on their domestic policies. What is being done domestically to promote and foster the agri-food sector of our economy?

Mr. Speaker, there are still so many questions that go unanswered each and every day. The people of rural Saskatchewan want and need to know what this government is doing to promote and foster the agricultural sector that is the backbone of rural Saskatchewan's economy.

(1430)

The people of this province need to know that they can count on this government to support and foster their industry. Many of the people that I have spoken with, Mr. Speaker, do not feel that they can count on this government to live up to their promises, be they electoral campaign rhetoric or documented proposals put forward in *Agriculture 2000* and the *Partnership for Growth*.

Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable to make the people of this province survive on blind faith. These people need a reason to believe in democracy, to believe in the party that governs them. It has been five years and nothing has happened and been done by this government to secure the faith of the people of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province need more than empty promises — they need an open and accountable government. The people of this province need to know what is being done for them with regards to the agri-food sector here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to take some more time to analyse on an in-depth basis the agricultural food industry of this province in relation to the rest of the country and in relation to the promises made in the *Agriculture 2000* document. It is for this reason that I move that debate on this Bill be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 48 — An Act to amend The Animal Identification Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I'll be moving second reading of The Animal Identification Act, but before I do I just want to say several words about this small amendment.

First of all, the animal identification is an important part of almost every livestock operation, as we know, in this province, and with the growing numbers of livestock in Saskatchewan we must strive to make our systems as efficient as possible.

Brands are now issued for a four-year period, as we all know, and all registrants are sent a renewal notice in advance to the expiry date on the fourth of the four-year anniversary and must submit a renewal request along with \$25 fee if a renewal is desired. An option to own a brand for a lifetime of the applicant would eliminate the need for this recurring application. There would then be the need to be able to cancel the registration to encourage adherence to the legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, the lifelong registration option will result in a reduction in the paper flow for both the applicant and for the government as well. The change is consistent with the government's objective of simplifying process for the public and minimizing costs.

Mr. Speaker, the expected \$200 registration for a lifetime option is not onerous as the Alberta government charges \$220 for its lifetime brands. Once registered the brand could be transferred for a fee and all fees will continue to be placed in the regulation.

This type of amendment comes after consultation with a number of the industry organizations and as well, they agree that a lifetime brand should be available as an option to the producer.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will do three main things: first, provide an option to register brands for the lifetime of the registrant, in addition to the four-year term which now exists; secondly, it will clarify procedures for cancelling a registration; and third, it will update the powers of the inspector consistent with the current constitutional requirements related to individual rights.

These proposed amendments are based on the close contact with the industry and an understanding of their concern and the desire for the amendments to the Act providing for further options to producers.

And it's therefore, Mr. Speaker, with those comments, I would ask all members of the Assembly to support the amendment and I therefore move second reading of a Bill No. 48, The Animal Identification Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to take some time to discuss a Bill that will have a great impact on the agricultural industry in this province.

This Bill will affect for the most part people who raise livestock, be it on the family farm or within a large corporation.

When we think of agriculture in this province, we often think of only grain farmers. Due to the changing times and the growing economy, diversification is common on Saskatchewan farms.

Cattle and hogs are no longer the only types of livestock raised on Saskatchewan farms. There are a large number of bison and elk ranchers as well as ostrich farms, llama farms, and sheep and goat farmers in this province.

This Bill will have a substantial effect on farmers that raise livestock that are required to be branded in March. Other types of wild game farmers whose animals are not required to be marked will not be affected by this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, many of the changes put forward in this Bill simply make sense. Farms are oftentimes a family business, and now all aspects of the farm will be transferable to spouses,

siblings, and children.

This government is starting to realize the importance that livestock farming plays in this province's economy. The Minister of Agriculture has made three major amendments to The Animal Identification Act. The first major change deals with the option of a lifetime or a four-year registration of a brand. Currently the only brand or mark available is for four years. Allowing for a lifetime brand option is a welcome change for most if not all livestock farmers.

The second major change that has been proposed through this Bill is to clarify the procedures that must be followed in order to cancel the registration of a brand or mark. This is similar to the clarifications that have been initiated in The Land Titles Act. The processes that have been followed in both cases are complex and confusing, and both of the Bills state clearly what needs to be done in each case.

The third major change initiated by this Bill is with respect to the powers of the inspectors. This Bill proposes to update these powers in order to make them consistent with requirements of current constitutional legislation.

There are a number of small changes proposed in this Bill. The first one shifts responsibility from this Act away from the Department of Agriculture and into the hands of livestock operations and land revenue branch. I certainly hope that this does not end up being another example of the provincial government's downsizing powers and responsibilities.

Many of the Bills that have been tabled this session have amendments that shift responsibility away from the department in question and move the responsibility into the hands of local, elected boards or council. I question the reasons behind such a move and intend to look into this amendment further.

The first amendment to this Act deals with providing for a lifetime registration of a brand or a mark. This has been mentioned briefly already. I will add though, that in the case of a corporation, the lifetime registration is limited to 20 years. This is logical as corporations are often in existence much longer than individuals.

There are significant changes being made in order to ensure that violations of this Act are dealt with fairly and with just punishment. Registration of brands or marks can be revoked and not reissued. The person or corporation who is accused of violation of certain provisions in this Act has 30 days to appeal this decision.

This Act, once amended, will also allow for re-registration of a brand by immediate family members of a deceased registrant. This is not a controversial change as it now allows for all aspects of the family-run livestock operation to be passed on to the immediate family members who want to run, and be responsible for, the family operation.

There's also requirements set out for the cancellation and re-registration of similar or identical marks. There is no point in branding or marking an animal if there is no safeguard in place

to ensure that they are all different. The Bill sets out provisions for the replacement of a mark that is identical or similar to any other mark registered within the province.

All of the above amendments are reasonable and are fair to all players involved. There are though a couple of amendments that do cause concern.

These ones are in regards to allowing an inspector to search any property and be allowed to examine and seize any animal, animal product, document, or record that the inspector believes to be in contravention of the provisions of this Act. There's also a clause that states that an inspector may not enter a private dwelling without consent, but it makes no mention of entering private property without consent.

This Bill states that the inspector needs a warrant in order to search and seize any documents or animals, but section 22.1(3) also states that any of the above-mentioned actions may be done by an inspector even if he or she does not have a warrant.

Well this does not give anyone a peace of mind. All it really says then is that a warrant is needed to search property and seize documents, but if the inspector does not have the time to get a warrant, he or she can search private property anyway. This may define the powers of an inspector within current constitutional requirements, but it still causes some concern.

As I have already mentioned, the majority of the amendments proposed in this Bill are housekeeping changes that make good sense. The only ones that I am a bit worry are with regards to the requirements for search and seizure on the part of the inspector.

I would like to spend time and more time looking into the possible implications and the outcomes of the amendments of this Act and I therefore move that the debate on this Bill be adjourned. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 60 — An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, at the end of my comments I will move second reading of The Crop Insurance Act.

The crop insurance program in Saskatchewan is currently under review. The review is a process moving us towards a new five-year Canada-Saskatchewan crop insurance agreement due to take effect for 1997-98. The review responds to concerns expressed by farmers regarding coverage levels, premium costs, and participation levels in the complexity of the program.

Farmers have been directly involved in this review, through currently held consultations meetings around the province. They have been well represented by Saskatchewan's Farm Support Review Committee who have, over the last number of years, closely examined safety nets and crop insurance on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, both Saskatchewan and the federal government have expressed support for crop insurance as the key component of the overall farm safety net package. To this end, Saskatchewan proposes to amend its Crop Insurance Act in order to allow for changes which may come from crop insurance review programs.

The proposed amendments would provide for more flexibility in program design than is currently possible given the existing wording of the legislation. The current wording limits the program which can be offered to one where governments match producer premium contributions at all levels of coverage. The amendment would allow programs to be offered with different premium-sharing arrangements.

Saskatchewan is reviewing a number of program options. One of the alternatives under consideration is a basic coverage program under which governments would fund most of the costs of the first level of coverage up to the 50 per cent of producers' long-term yields, while farmers would pay the majority of the costs of higher coverage levels.

This type of program was recommended by Farm Support Review Committee in its August 1995 report on crop insurance.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance is a valuable risk-management program for the farmers of Saskatchewan. The comprehensive crop insurance program and its potential changes to the program necessitate amending the legislation in order to provide the proper time line to develop and deliver a complete program for Saskatchewan farmers.

The amended legislation will put Saskatchewan at par with most other provinces who have already had their own enabling legislation in order to modify their own crop insurance programs.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food and its Crop Insurance Corporation work closely with farmers and industry organizations in preparation for any proposed changes to legislation that affects their industry.

These proposed amendments demonstrate that characteristic. Farmers' concerns with crop insurance programs have brought a comprehensive review involving consultations with farmers themselves.

The proposed amendments will provide Saskatchewan and Canada the flexibility to put together a new crop insurance program and a new five-year agreement that addresses those concerns and targets crop insurance dollars to best meet the needs of farmers.

I ask members of the Assembly to support these amendments. I therefore, Mr. Speaker, move second reading of Bill 60, the crop insurance program . . . The Crop Insurance Act.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the amendment proposed within Bill 60. Although just one change, this Act could affect every farmer in Saskatchewan who buys crop insurance. The

change outlined in clause 11 will expand the factors the government uses to determine its financial obligation to the crop insurance plans. The amount paid in premiums will still be a factor, but with the changes the government will also consider the corporation's needs along with the government's appropriate share of the cost.

In general, we would like to know exactly why the government feels this new legislation is necessary. Don't get me wrong. There are many, many aspects of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance which need drastic improvements. But we question the amount of input Saskatchewan farmers had when the government drafted this legislation.

(1445)

More importantly, we wonder if the government was even listening to farmers' concerns and suggestions when it held meetings to discuss crop insurance options in March. The government obviously was not listening to farmers when it demanded farmers repay their GRIP overpayments, even after promising in this very House that this would not be done. The government did not listen or really even ask farmers for input before it slashed away at the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance structure.

Over 100 crop insurance agents across rural Saskatchewan will be out of work. The only farmer input into the cuts was a year-and-a-half-old survey done on services provided by crop insurance agents. The bulk of this government's decision was based on a consultant's report done by Ernst & Young.

I would like to ask this government to seriously rethink the whole process involving legislative changes. If the Minister of Agriculture seriously has the concerns of rural people and Saskatchewan farmers at heart, then he'll make himself accountable. Accountability means upholding promises made by your department, and above all else, gathering input from those that will be affected by any legislative changes.

It seems to me that this government is having a problem understanding what accountability means. It needs to look beyond the city limits of Regina and Saskatoon to see what a devastating impact provincial funding cuts are having on rural people. Agriculture has long been the backbone of Saskatchewan's economy, yet this government felt the need to slash over \$52 million from the Ag budget.

I know taxpayers across the province are also wondering why this government is not being accountable for funding cuts in other areas, such as cuts to municipalities. The bottom line is that the government is simply shifting its fiscal responsibility onto the backs of Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Then, incredibly, the government then tries to disguise this offloading as presenting new challenges for the 21st century. I have a challenge for the Minister of Agriculture. I challenge him to take a close look at the crop insurance needs of Saskatchewan farmers. If this government decided to genuinely listen to the farmers, it would hear the same complaints that we have heard from farmers — that the current crop insurance

program are extremely inadequate. They feel that this government really does not have an overall crop insurance plan. They say that the premiums are too high and the pay-outs are too low.

These are just a sample of the farmers' major concerns, Mr. Speaker. Once again I remind the minister that the key to the democratic process is to listen to the concerns brought forward by those being governed. We would like to consult more with Saskatchewan farmers about the impact that Bill 60 will have on them. Therefore I move that this debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 38

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Anguish that **Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to speak for a few moments on Bill 38, The Power Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the first thing that this piece of legislation teaches us is never judge a government by the size of its legislation. Because, Mr. Speaker, at first glance, this looks like a fairly straightforward Bill, not too much to it. While it may appear that many of the changes proposed in this Bill are of the housekeeping variety, a second look tells us otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this Bill oversteps the government's bounds and allows it to completely circumvent the privacy of our citizens any time it sees fit. And though this particular Bill deals only with SaskPower, I think if passed in this form, it would set a dangerous precedent — a precedent that I don't believe the citizens of Saskatchewan would want set.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that anybody in Saskatchewan would object to the clause which gives Saskatchewan Power officials clearance to enter private residence in the event of a serious emergency — situations in which property, life and limb are put at risk. On the contrary, I believe that most people would see this as a reasonable and responsible action; it's common sense and I think the people would approve.

However, there is much that is left to be desired in this Bill, Mr. Speaker. Living in Saskatchewan, we all know there are times when certain boundaries have to be crossed in order to protect the good of ourselves or others. One could envision instances when SaskPower simply has to act in order to protect homes, businesses, even entire neighbourhoods, and this might entail entering a private home without permission to fix a problem or to cut off the power.

And if this action is done only in emergencies and in very rare

circumstances, the people of Saskatchewan could and would understand and accept it. And, Mr. Speaker, in the explanatory notes that accompany this Bill, it states quite clearly that the reason for . . . the reason for this Bill. It says SaskPower employees needed some written assurance that it is all right to enter homes without permission in order to deal with a potentially hazardous situation. And that is fine.

But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill goes way, way beyond that circumstance. This Bill potentially gives SaskPower employees a ticket into any home in any town, anywhere in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe and I think that most Saskatchewan residents would agree this is a prospect that is very troubling indeed.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a society where the government quite rightly has limits put on it. Our constitution allows us certain freedoms in the way of protection from the power of the government. Historical precedent also dictates that we in Canada, we in Saskatchewan, have the right to enjoy our freedoms free from outrageous government interference.

Finally, plain, old-fashioned common decency states our elected officials simply cannot give themselves the power to blatantly infringe on citizens' rights.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe this Bill goes a long way in infringing on my rights as a citizen of this province, and it infringes on the rights of everyone — everyone who is forced to deal with SaskPower, which of course is nearly every man, woman, and child in this province.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower, we are told, is owned by the people of this province for the good of the people of this province. But when I read this piece of legislation, I have to wonder, who owns who? Because it appears to me it is SaskPower in charge of the people here, not the other way around.

So why am I so alarmed by Bill 38? Because, Mr. Speaker, it gives too much power to the appointees who run SaskPower, and it gives way, way too much power to the provincial cabinet, out of the view of this Legislative Assembly.

Like I said, as long as the Bill dealt with an emergency situation, I was really just fine with that. But that was only a few lines in this Bill. From then on, it listed other circumstance when SaskPower could unilaterally enter our homes without our permission and with very little notice.

This legislation gives its employees the right to enter into our homes under several circumstances outlined in the Bill. The first and foremost is to enter our private homes to cut off electrical service if payments are overdue. Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone in this House, is it so almighty important to cut off someone's service that we're willing to give them this extraordinary power to ignore our right to privacy? And to make it possible to do so if Bills are as little as 10 days overdue is absolutely unacceptable.

There simply must be alternative means to getting payment than resorting to this extreme measure. I mean SaskPower does

pretty well for itself year in and year out — \$100 million profits every year. And they want the right to ignore locked doors of our homes because somebody is a couple of weeks late in paying their bill. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but that is just simply unbelievable.

Is SaskPower so arrogant that they think that they deserve this kind of access to our homes? Are they so out of touch over there that they believe that people will stand for such an outrageous infringement of their rights? And what about this government opposite. Has their own special brand of immense arrogance grown even worse of late? Because I really didn't think it could get much worse.

Haven't they already robbed our citizens of enough of their rights already? People in rural Saskatchewan no longer have the right to decent health care and they don't have the right to drive on safe highways.

Back in 1992, this government took away farmers' rights to sue even though the government had flagrantly broken a legally binding contract. They retroactively disbanded an impartial panel set up to decide on judges' salaries because the Justice minister didn't get the results he was looking for.

On and on it goes, Mr. Speaker. On and on we see a government in this province that thinks it should be in complete control of the people, when in fact, Mr. Speaker, it should be the people in charge of the government — first, last, and always. And if the members opposite took this rule seriously, they would never have dared to bring forth this arrogant piece of legislation that has so little regard for the rights of the Saskatchewan people.

In this government's hungry quest for absolute power, the rights of our citizens have again been swept away by overwhelming arrogance.

Mr. Speaker, this government's view of the people they govern is absolutely disgraceful. We see this every day with cabinet minister after cabinet minister standing in this House and treating the people with disdain. That attitude manifests itself most clearly in this ridiculous piece of legislation.

And there's still a lot more to the Bill, Mr. Speaker, than I've outlined so far, so let's continue on.

So as we've heard, Mr. Speaker, under this Bill, SaskPower will have the right to enter our homes if our power bill is more than 10 days overdue. I personally find this quite appalling, but perhaps there are some out there who think it would be reasonable. That's fine and it's open to debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, that barely scratches the surface of the outrageous control this gives the Crown corporation. Because, Mr. Speaker, not only can employees of SaskPower enter our homes to cut off our service if we are delinquent or in an emergency situation, they can also come in at will simply to read our meter.

I ask the government and SaskPower: is it really that vital to

read meters in such a quick fashion that you need the right to come in unannounced and uninvited when we're not at home to let you in? Do you really think that SaskPower customers would find this acceptable? Surely you can't believe that.

But, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop even there. SaskPower employees can come on in to inspect services or to remove meters and other equipment after, of course, they've entered on a previous occasion to cut off our service.

However, Mr. Speaker, the real topper of this Bill comes in one of its final clauses. As is the case in so many of the Bills this government forces through this House, this flawed Bill gives the cabinet outrageous and unfettered control outside the watchful eye of the people's elected Assembly.

Section 50, subsection 3 states SaskPower can break into our houses unannounced. And I quote:

In any other circumstances prescribed in the regulations, the corporation may, by its officers and employees, at any reasonable time, enter the premises of customers and cut off the supply of electrical energy or steam or discontinue any other service rendered.

And, Mr. Speaker, who decides what these regulations are? Again, I quote from section 59 (4):

... the Lieutenant Governor in Council (in other words, the cabinet) may make regulations:

(a) governing the entry of premises by the officers and employees of the corporation;

(b) prescribing circumstances in which the officers and employees of the corporation may enter premises.

A lot of fancy words, Mr. Speaker. But in the end they have a very simple meaning. These clauses in effect give the cabinet the right to give SaskPower the go-ahead to enter anyone's private home, private property, in any circumstances they see fit. Never mind the previous clauses that spelled out when and where this could be done because this last clause is the big one. It gives the government absolutely unfettered permission to take an axe to our right of privacy.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition caucus has had a lot of trouble accepting the need for regulations, at least to the extent this government uses them in legislation. So much of our legislation now is nothing more than a skeletal outline of what a Bill could end up meaning.

This is one of those times, Mr. Speaker, when safeguards should have been included right in the Bill. Instead, there is absolutely nothing in this legislation that puts any breaks whatsoever on SaskPower or this government. And that's just ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, and it's unacceptable.

(1500)

Where does it stop, Mr. Speaker? Why would we believe for

one minute that SaskPower would be the only Crown monopoly given this right? SaskTel and SaskEnergy would obviously want the same access to our lives, and so would the umpteen other Crown corporations that also control our lives.

Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition would know more about this than I, I believe this Bill gives employees and officers of SaskPower, and ultimately the provincial cabinet, greater authority than the police in entering our homes. And that is simply wrong on so many levels.

I don't have the time to list them all, but let me just relate to the House one problem, one simple problem that I have. This world of ours is unfortunately growing evermore dangerous. This House has heard me talk many times about the children of this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we as parents and grandparents work hard to keep our children safe. Unfortunately in today's economy more and more of our children have to stay home alone more often than ever, than is otherwise acceptable, because of both parents working. I'm not talking of very young children, I'm talking of those children a little bit older that might be trusted to be home alone for an hour or two after school before mom and dad come back from work.

Mr. Speaker, to keep those kids safe, parents often, and most of the time, tell them to never talk to strangers and never, never let strangers into the house when mom and dad aren't there. Now are parents supposed to teach their children never to let strangers into the house unless they're wearing a SaskPower uniform? We need to think twice about the implications of this whole thing.

Mr. Speaker, when I first heard about this Bill when the legislature opened, I thought my colleagues were joking. Then I saw the printed Bill for the first time and was astounded. I thought at first I was overreacting, but in discussing the ramifications of Bill 38 with my colleagues, family, and friends, I truly feel that I am not overreacting.

The word most often used by those whom I asked about this Bill, is the word scary. That's right, Mr. Speaker. People think this kind of heavy-handed action by our elected government is simply scary. They're scared because they've seen the government usurp so many of their rights over the years. Government has become ever more pervasive in our society and our system. To many, a Bill like this seems to be the ultimate step towards complete government control of our lives.

People are concerned enough as it is, Mr. Speaker, that government, and in particular this government, has stopped listening to them. The government ministers talk at the people so much, they don't have the chance to listen to the people. They're always telling us what's good for us instead of trying to understand what it is the people of Saskatchewan truly want. The ministers over there are so caught up in their own perceived importance, they don't have the common sense to realize a piece of legislation like Bill 38 simply goes too far.

For anyone who believes the state's authority should be

restricted, this Bill goes too far. For anyone who believes our homes are our sanctuaries, this Bill goes too far. And for anyone who thinks a little authority for the government is too much, this Bill goes way too far.

Mr. Speaker, other words I've heard tossed around when I've discussed this Bill with others are words such as police state. Yes, most of the time this term has been said with smiles. But let's look back behind those smiles, Mr. Speaker. Behind that word is a small element of truth because, Mr. Speaker, while Saskatchewan is far from being a totalitarian state, this Bill smacks of just that.

I mean would the government be willing to grant these unusual and extreme powers to a private company not owned by the government? Would the government think it's all right for, let's say the cable company, to come into our homes uninvited and unannounced, just because we've fallen a little behind on our cable television bills? Would the members opposite, all of whom were democratically elected by the people, believe this scenario would be all right? I truly doubt it. I truly doubt that they would be comfortable in giving a private company such as a cable company *carte blanche* to enter our private dwellings.

So I ask the members opposite, what's the difference, for goodness' sake! Of course many of the members over there will be surprised to hear this, and I doubt that few, if any of them, actually read or understand the laws they are voting for in this House. They just stand when they are told to and they vote as they are told.

I doubt if any of the members opposite have actually thought about the consequences of a Bill such as this one, just as they failed to think about the consequences of closing rural hospitals, tearing up GRIP contracts, or letting our highway system go to seed. Just as they had no input into those decisions, they probably have no input into this Bill either. And looking at the Bill, it appears perhaps that the cabinet didn't get much of a look at it either. It looks to me like Mr. Messer's lawyers concocted this Bill completely apart from the elected officials, and the elected officials have let it come before this House.

Before I move to adjourn debate on Bill 38, I want to pose some questions to the ministers and members of the government side of this House, over and above those I've already asked this afternoon.

I ask them if there is enough goodwill towards SaskPower in Saskatchewan today that people are willing to give up so many of their freedoms to make SaskPower employees' jobs a little easier? Do they really think that kind of sentiment actually exists out there among the voters and residents of Saskatchewan? Do they honestly think that people have such trust in their government that they're willing to let the cabinet decide, behind closed doors, when and where our rights can be violated?

I can't believe they're willing to see such a situation occur in Saskatchewan; yet, Mr. Speaker, I fear if the members opposite let this pass without a peep, as happens too often in this House,

we are giving the government more power than we should. By passing laws such as this one, we are saying to the people, never mind your rights — we're the government and we know what's best. Just sit there and take it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have to take a very serious and very close look at this Bill. We have to consider the ramifications of Bill 38 very carefully. More to the point, the government has to reconsider. Pass the provisions that talk about emergency or hazardous situations by all means. But I urge you to take a hard second look at the rest of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we still have many more stakeholders to consult. As well we have a number of legal opinions coming our way regarding this Bill. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn debate at this time. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 44

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wiens that **Bill No 44 — An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act, 1993** be now read a second time.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to put it plainly, this Bill is an outright attack on public accountability. After speaking with many of my constituents and many people around the province, it has become quite clear that there are some deep concerns over how our family of Crown corporations are accountable to their shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan.

This Bill before us only further outlines what some of the problems are.

Since being elected to this Assembly, I endeavoured to do the job assigned to me of holding this government accountable. From the very first day I began this process, Mr. Speaker, I found that there are far too many roadblocks which prevent the taxpayers of Saskatchewan from really knowing what their government does with their investments. This Bill simply proposes one more roadblock, one more means of escaping accountability from the taxpayer.

From a brief review of reports from the Provincial Auditor, any of the members of this House would soon discover that our budgetary process allows almost 40 per cent of government expenditure to escape public scrutiny. While these books are audited and the Provincial Auditor has access to them, he is constrained from telling us all that is going on because the Act which creates his office does not allow him to release information which is not already public. While the services of the auditor are valuable, he cannot serve the full watchdog role, which is the one that the public often believes he serves.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us today is essentially flawed in that it attempts to give the Crown Investments Corporation additional powers. The Crown Investments Corporation gets more powers to handle its activities, but the public, and the

official opposition who must defend their interests, are not given any additional means of assuring that taxpayers' money is being well used. And that is just not fair. It's a far cry from what this government promised some five years ago when it rallied support for itself by offering to open the books.

The essential flaw in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it plans on allowing the Crown Investments Corporation to invest, to guarantee loans, and provide any other financial assistance that it wishes, to any corporation that it wants. This is a big change from the present legislation which prevented the government from investing or providing assistance through the Crown Investments Corporation to any corporation unless it already owned shares in that company.

The minister and the members opposite can say, what is wrong with that? Basically, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that these corporations are already beyond the realm of the budgetary process which allows for some scrutiny. To free the Crown Investments Corporation up to invest almost as it wishes would be tantamount to letting the Crown Investments Corporation escape even further from public accountability.

To let the Crown Investments Corporation invest, lend, or provide assistance to corporations beyond its control could allow for a whole host of unknown troubles. At the present moment we at least have some idea of which corporations the Crown Investments Corporation has an interest in.

The labyrinth of corporations however grows ever wider. We have subsidiaries that create other subsidiaries. These then go on to joint partnerships with other companies. It's bad enough to keep track of these now, so to allow the Crown Investments Corporation to do this would make matters even worse. The public would be poorly served by such an amendment to the present legislation. In fact it would be easy to argue we are poorly served by the legislation that we have now.

Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of weeks we've heard the government's cuts to many services and programs that we value. In my constituency we've lost two highway depots, and every health district in Thunder Creek took a serious budget cut. For some districts with deficit problems, this will just make everything all that more unmanageable.

To top it all off, we have the government telling many elderly in my constituency and in Moose Jaw, sorry, we don't have any money to keep our promises on the geriatric unit at Providence Place.

Mr. Speaker, when the government says money is scarce, it shouldn't at the same time also try to tell everyone that they need less public scrutiny for how they spend our money in the Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan would agree with me when I say that every dollar spent or used by the government's family of Crown corporations should get just as much scrutiny as any spent on our families. There should be no double standard. If anything, Mr. Speaker, this government should look at bolstering its system of public accountability for

the Crown corporations.

Sure we have a Crown Corporations Committee. This committee however, Mr. Speaker, is dominated by members from the government side. While there are many that are hard-working, the question we have to ask is whether they want to work hard in making this government accountable. The public believes the members opposite are more likely to work hard at getting into the cabinet and trying to stay there than they are at working to ensure public money is properly spent.

Mr. Speaker, I will give the members opposite an example of where their hearts are. A couple of weeks ago we were discussing an important suggestion from the Provincial Auditor in one of the Public Accounts Committee meetings. It was a suggestion which relates quite closely to improving public accountability and to matters raised in this Bill. The auditor suggests that the government should produce an annual report covering all of its activities. That is a good suggestion and it would improve accountability. Instead of calling on the government to do this, the members opposite, led by the member from Regina South who is against greater public accountability, voted against this proposal. Instead they just want the government to look at it a little bit further.

Well, Mr. Speaker, somehow it's okay for the government to go full throttle in demanding more powers to spend money. But when it comes to being accountable, the members opposite feel that we ought to keep the thing in park. And that, Mr. Speaker, again is a double standard. It shows quite clearly how these committees are not as effective as they should be at helping the opposition hold the government accountable.

What it shows, Mr. Speaker, is that in lieu of having good, strong committees whose members act without regard for partisan loyalty, we need to have stronger laws that force the government to disclose more of its Crown activities.

(1515)

I know the members opposite will say that they have made great improvements over the Tories, but is that how they should compare themselves? Comparing yourself to someone who you bash every day for being irresponsible, for hiding financial activities from the public, is hardly comparing yourself to someone who could serve as a role . . . as a mentor. It's more like a young, aspiring artist comparing themselves to a velvet-painting artist rather than a van Gogh. I'm sure artists don't want to do something like that, so why should this government.

If you want greater public accountability, compare themselves to ideals and benchmarks laid down by auditors serving governments in jurisdictions all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill gives greater powers to the Crown Investments Corporation, but these powers are constrained by the need for an order in council. That constraint is some comfort to the members opposite, but it shouldn't be. I'd like to provide the members opposite with a small story of why these orders are no comfort that our money is being well used.

In last fall's mid-year financial report, it indicated that the government had some borrowing activities that were far in excess of what was expected. The bulk of this additional borrowing was a hundred million dollar loan procured by the Crown Investments Corporation in 1995. When I read this I was quite concerned. This government thinks nothing of borrowing another \$100 million for Crown corporations unexpectedly, but it cries to no end about an expected cut in federal transfers of a much smaller amount. The sense in that sort of prioritization is somewhat lost on most people, Mr. Speaker.

I was curious about the extra borrowing so I had arranged a meeting to discuss this with the Minister of Finance. When we met in January, I asked what this borrowing was for. A hundred million dollars is a lot of money and I thought she would be able to provide some information to explain this situation. The explanation I was provided would be a shock to the taxpayers of this province. I was told this sort of thing happens all the time. We shouldn't worry, I was told; it's just borrowing for something they want to do but they're possibly doing it a year earlier than they had expected.

I left the minister's office with her promise that she would provide us with a better explanation. I waited and I waited and gave up, and then I simply put in a request for freedom of information. What I received was a copy of the order in council signed by the appropriate officials. The order explained that they had authorized them to borrow another \$100 million. Terribly absent from the order was any explanation of what these funds were for.

Mr. Speaker, the lesson here is simple. How can anyone in the public be assured that their tax dollar is well spent if they don't know what the goals were for spending that money in the first place? If we don't know what the government intends to accomplish for us by lending a company our tax dollars or allowing the Crown Investments Corporation to take on further debt which is ultimately backed by taxpayers, how can we know whether this government accomplished those goals? That is a glaring error.

Given those concerns, I chose to pose the same question yet another time, and I asked a written question. And instead of providing an answer, this government converted it in order to avoid accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that my example should provide emphasis to the members opposite that the requirement to gain an order in council provides little, if any, constraint on the government. Until the government has to disclose the details involved with such things, including what protections there are for the taxpayer, there will be no comfort for the taxpayers of this province. That is a basic flaw in this Bill.

The concerns expressed in my remarks are shared by the Provincial Auditor. The auditor recognizes that there will be no accountability unless the taxpayer and this Assembly first knows what the government is trying to accomplish with its Crowns.

The auditor made several recommendations on how to improve accountability. His recommendations, made in a non-partisan fashion, would provide some important improvements. The Bill before us today, Mr. Speaker, will do just the opposite.

Among the auditor's suggestions are two very important ideas. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, he has suggested that the government should introduce a budget that covers its activities as a whole, not just its activities within the General Revenue Fund.

This is important because it would force the government to tell us what it wants to do with the Crowns in at least some form or fashion. I understand that there may be some reason to protect commercial secrets like technology, but this should have its limits. This government should really question whether it should be involved in commitments where secrets extend to financial details. This is because knowledge of these are key for maintaining public accountability.

Basically put, I think the auditor sums this situation up quite nicely by saying why should we use public money for purposes that we cannot make public? The whole point behind the Provincial Auditor's suggestion of a budget that covers all of government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to ensure that we all know what this government wants to accomplish with its Crowns. Once we all know, then we can hold the government accountable for its actions.

The Provincial Auditor made a second suggestion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is somewhat related. The auditor suggested last fall that the government produce a report which shows how its performance matched with its budgeted expectations. This is the linchpin to accountability. If the government tells us what it wants to do and whether it was able to fulfil those goals, we would know how our tax money is being used.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of expending their efforts making it easier for the Crowns to spend our money, this government should focus its efforts on making the Crowns more accountable to us all. I urge the members opposite to seriously consider those suggestions from the auditor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another concern regarding the Bill before us. This Bill also offers more powers to the Crown Investments Corporation to engage in capital market activities. These activities include interest rate and commodity swaps. The explanatory notes in this Bill explain that this clause isn't in here in order to provide for new legal constraints which were imposed by court decisions in the United Kingdom.

Those comments in the explanatory notes raised too many questions. I would suggest that the minister try to come up with a far more detailed explanation of why this feature is in this Bill. Namely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like the minister to tell us what sort of capital market activities our Crown corporations have been involved in. I would also like to know more details especially with regard to the particulars of this court decision. The explanatory notes talk of a court case in the United Kingdom, and I think that given that these court documents are public, the minister should provide them to the opposition. I question the intent of this Bill, but an explanation

of this particular court case would at least go some distance to alleviating these concerns. It would at least show the members opposite are interested in remaining accountable.

With regard to these capital market activities, a review of this Bill demonstrates that the government has left this whole thing very broad and open. I would really like to know why the minister feels these powers should be so loosely defined. Capital market activities could expose the government and the taxpayer to significant risk of losing some of the money we have invested.

I think given the potential problems here, the government should be more upfront in defining what sort of capital market activities it intends to allow and under what circumstances. In our Crown corporations we do have certain Crowns that are brought under this Act but at the same time they are empowered by a separate piece of legislation.

As an opposition we would like to know why, if the government insists on this power, why it could not provide certain activities to certain Crowns and more clearly lay them out. Maybe for example the Crown Investments Corporation and SaskTel might require something here that is different than say SaskPower or SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), whose international activities might be more limited.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to these capital market activities, not only am I concerned that this Bill does not lay them out clearly and in a constrained manner, but I am also concerned about the accountability system that will be attached to them. When the government engages in one of these activities through its Crowns, given that these are new activities, will the Legislative Assembly in turn be given some new means of scrutinizing these? Will each and every corporation be indicating to the Assembly when one of these takes place, what each transaction was for, whom it was with, and how much money is involved?

Mr. Speaker, I think this is only fair. If the government gets more powers to carry out more activities, it's only fair that the Assembly receive some additional powers or some means to offset this and to hold the powerful executive arm of government in check for how it's spending our money. I think this is reasonable and I know many other people in this province would share that same opinion.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of fairness concerning this Bill, there is another matter to deal with. As I said before, the government is demanding full speed ahead when it comes to getting more powers to spend our money, but is putting on the brakes when it comes to improving accountability measures.

This is a double standard and it compels one to make the following point. If the government wants more power so its Crown corporations can engage in more activities, then it should first show that it is committed to being more open and accountable.

If the government gives the people of this province a sign that it is committed to this sort of activity, then it would be easier to possibly accept that it needs more powers. It would be easier

because the government could show us that it is indeed committed to greater accountability.

Before the government gets what it wants in this Bill it should make good on a number of suggestions for greater openness that would show that it's committed to using any new powers responsibly. The Provincial Auditor, whom I referred to many times, made a number of suggestions that particularly relate to the Crown Investments Corporation.

I mention the Crown Investments Corporation as an example because it or its subsidiaries are the most likely to be involved in the activities suggested in this Bill. The auditor says that there are a number of problems in the Crown Investments Corporation that could negatively impact on the taxpayer. He makes recommendations to fix them.

It would be fair to suggest that before this government goes seeking more powers it should ensure that the ones it has are being properly used and that there are accountability and managerial controls in place to safeguard the public's assets.

There are a number of things the government could do, Mr. Speaker. The auditor notes in his fall '95 report that there are some 19 Crown Investments Corporation's subsidiary Crowns that do not table annual reports to the Assembly. And I just recall that the members opposite on the Public Accounts Committee thought that this was not a problem, in a recent Public Accounts Committee meeting as well.

But these subsidiaries would likely be able to engage in more activities if this Bill is passed. And in the future they would be doing so while we're still not being provided in the House with an annual report. And that is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it's one of the things that must be fixed.

Another important observation made by the auditor relates to an earlier suggestion that I noted. Earlier I had noted that the auditor believes the government should be making a budget and a report to cover all of its activities. By doing so, the public and the Assembly would have the means of holding this government accountable. In his fall report, the auditor observed that the Crown Investments Corporation's board of directors has not even been receiving these sorts of things from the management of the corporation. And that's sort of scary, Mr. Speaker.

The auditor notes that the CIC's (Crown Investments Corporation) board lacks essential planning, essential planning information, and it doesn't receive a budget from the management of the corporation on a consolidated basis and it doesn't receive a report showing how the results compared with the planned goals or targets. That is quite a scary proposition, especially when you consider that the very people who are asking for these powers are the board members of CIC.

The CIC board is comprised of cabinet ministers. I find it irresponsible that these very people are asking for this House to give the Crowns extra powers when they do not demand this essential planning information from the management of these Crown corporations. I would say to the members opposite that

the honourable thing to do here is to remedy a problem like that before asking for any more powers.

(1530)

The lack of essential planning information, I understand, is actually a lot more widespread than this. The auditor in that same report has suggested that these same cabinet ministers on the board of CIC are not receiving copies of interim financial statements that deal with CIC or CIC Industrial Interests Inc. on a regular basis.

These are important devices that a board of directors needs to control the activities of a Crown. If these members opposite cannot even use these management tools properly, why, Mr. Speaker, should they expect to be able to handle any more.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more examples. There's also the concern that boards in the Crowns are not clear about their roles. These people must oversee the management of these Crowns and provide them with direction, but they are not certain of their roles. There is some misunderstanding among these people as to which sorts of legislation empower them to act.

A number of statutes provide them with broad powers to carry out the authority entrusted to them while others provide more specific outlines as to what they are allowed to do. The government has failed to ensure that this information is even properly communicated.

On the issue of communication, there's also some concern about how member Crowns communicate to their parent Crowns. The auditor suggests there is a wide variation in the types and quality of information that is provided by boards of CIC Crowns to the board of the parent Crown itself.

There is also an indication that the communication between Crowns is not as good as it should be. We have a parent Crown whose board does not use the tools it has, being properly acquired information needed to plot a strategy for the whole of all of the Crowns under its purview.

We also see the auditor reporting that Crowns do not even report to one another and to their boards about changes in their key personnel. That's not a good example, Mr. Speaker, of the responsible use of power. It concerns me that this is the record of the same people that are asking for more powers here today.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that I've run into a number of roadblocks since I was elected as a member of this House. Those roadblocks prevented me from getting the information I believe was necessary to hold the government accountable. Before the members seek out more powers, they should consider dealing with these very issues.

One of the roadblocks which I found the most disturbing involved some of the agreements signed by Crown corporations. And it's funny that the explanatory notes of this Bill mentioned the United Kingdom. I say that because last year and this year I repeatedly asked for the agreement for sale of

LCL Cable Communications Ltd. I also asked for an explanation of whether Don Ching and Garry Simons received any part of the \$50,000 payment made by LCL to SaskTel to compensate for their services as directors. In these cases, what I ran into were confidentiality clauses between different partners.

All too often the government cannot release information about one of its dealings because it has signed an agreement which has a confidentiality clause. Without permission from all partners, it cannot tell the taxpayer what it is doing with our money. While the reasoning is that these things are here to protect private partners, the reality is that private partners are now being used to protect the government from accountability.

Mr. Speaker, this was not the only example where I ran into this situation. I would strongly suggest that before this government wastes any more effort getting extra powers to run the Crowns, it should deal with the problems that I've mentioned here today.

Concerning the confidentiality clauses, I would suggest that the government consider inserting some acknowledgement of our freedom of information law so that its partners accept from the start that their activities with the government may from time to time become public. This may be a necessary means of protecting the taxpayer. After all, Mr. Speaker, it's their money that's at stake.

Mr. Speaker, accountability is a serious issue and we would like more opportunity to review the ramifications of this Bill. And given this, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to more answers and I would move adjournment of debate on this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 58

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 58 — An Act to amend The Land Titles Act and to make a consequential amendment** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on what I feel could be an extremely controversial Bill. The government in the proposed amendments to The Land Titles Act is potentially opening a Pandora's box of issues.

There are so many implications from this Bill that could reach far beyond the floor of the legislature. People in my constituency, and for that matter in constituencies throughout the province, will be affected by the decisions we make in the House. If we were to allow the government to pass a controversial Bill without extensive discussion and consultation, we would be falling short in our responsibilities to the people.

Mr. Speaker, day after day my colleagues and I stand in this House to talk about Bills brought forward by the NDP government. And day after day, Bill after Bill, we bring forward concerns about this government's lack of

accountability to the people of this province. It seems that so many of the changes they want to make to this Bill and to all of the Bills deal with an increase of power to the government.

Every time we get a new Bill, the issue arises. The Bill gives the government more power. Over the course of time it has become painfully obvious that the NDP's main objective is to take power from the people and put it in the hands of this government.

Well as right leaning as this government appears to be at times, it is evident that some of the socialism is coming through. The Premier and his caucus of muted followers believe that they should control the lives of Saskatchewan people; that they alone can decide what is best for every individual.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus is sick and tired of this patronizing attitude towards the people of this province. And if we're tired of it already, think how fed up our constituents are. They have been forced to watch the government bulldoze its way through change after change, and while their protests are pointedly ignored.

It is the wrong way to run a government, Mr. Speaker, and it's about time that the members opposite realized it. Look at what it's done for us so far. Is our economy flourishing? Hardly. Rural Saskatchewan is being reduced to a shell of its former glory days, thanks to this government's actions.

And it's not like urban Saskatchewan is faring much better. Every time I go through downtown Regina I'm shocked at how many office spaces and storefronts are empty; and even more shocked when I sit in this legislature day after day and listen to the Minister of Economic Development spout sunshine and roses about our economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he's stretching the truth. And the high office vacancy rate is proof positive that he's trying to hide the facts from Saskatchewan people. In fact it seems like only part of the economy that is flourishing is grain, potash, oil, and uranium, and the government has nothing to do with any of these.

Perhaps the members opposite should wake up and smell the roses. It's a simple equation — government controls equals no jobs and a weak economy; lack of government controls equal plenty of jobs and a strong economy. Lets hope the NDP members learn to put two and two together before our economy is completely destroyed.

The fact is that this government is not creating a positive business climate. And the fact is that the members opposite cannot make the right decisions for the people of this province. It is the people who must make the decisions. And I don't think the NDP realize that when they were elected, this did not give them the unlimited authority over the lives of Saskatchewan people. I don't think they realize how capable the people of this province really are — capable of making the right decisions in the best interest now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we object to the government's continued efforts to turn every piece of legislation in this

province into a government-controlled game. I know that several of the members opposite have children and grandchildren. Is this the kind of legacy they want to leave our youth — a legacy of over-regulation and tight-fisted government control?

An Hon. Member: — Who's writing this stuff?

Mr. Bjornerud: — If I'm going too fast for the members opposite, I can slow down.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, not surprisingly, does try to take power from the people. For example, one amendment will eliminate the qualifications of staff working as a registrar in the Land Titles Office. Current legislation ensures that a registrar must be a lawyer or serve a minimum period of time in the system. The legislation would now be controlled by registration if this amendment passes. The system has worked as is for 91 years. What is the need of change now?

Mr. Speaker, the change wreaks of political patronage. What would stop the Premier from selecting the new registrars or deputy registrars from his list of NDP hacks? All of a sudden the decision made at land titles could be distinctly NDP slant, and whenever that happens it spells trouble for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, although this may not seem likely, our fears about political patronage are not unfounded. What are we supposed to think when we see the Jack Messers, Carole Bryants, and Donald Chings, among others, strategically placed by the NDP. This government is so driven by a need for control, we believe they could slot their political cronies into all sorts of organizations.

We want to be sure that this will not happen. I mean, look at the results. Problems run rampant at SaskTel and SaskPower. Workers are unhappy, and in the past months employees have taken strike action. The NDP government's choice of leaders does not have a good track record. Obviously political patronage does not run companies well at all.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue I would like to touch on today has to do with the proposed changes which will permit Indian bands to own land in their own name instead of through a corporation. And, Mr. Speaker, I should make it clear that we do not necessarily oppose this, but we do need better clarification on what this will mean to taxpayers of this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry I got going too fast; I'll slow down.

Is this change going to be revenue neutral to the taxpayers or will there be a reduction or increase? Currently Indian bands are allowed to own land but only if they established a private corporation for this. Taxes are paid through the company like all other land holdings. If the legislation changes, then bands will be allowed to own the company directly.

Mr. Speaker, in the government's own memorandum they state that registration of lands by bands does not give the land reserve status. Lands registered under The Land Titles Act will

be treated the same as other land holdings. Mr. Speaker, we would like this point further clarified. What exactly is the government proposing? If they aren't giving the land reserve status, does this mean that the changes will indeed be revenue neutral?

Mr. Speaker, RMs (rural municipality) and towns are very concerned about the tax loss over reserve status on newly purchased lands. Now this Bill may make the problem even more magnified.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments outlined in Bill 58 seem vague at best, and we believe that Saskatchewan people deserve clear, easily interpreted laws. This may be difficult for a government that has made an art form out of eluding the real issue. The members opposite have learned to shroud unpopular decisions with half-truths; they continue to hide behind empty words and finger pointing and hope that Saskatchewan people will continue to believe them.

But things are changing, Mr. Speaker. People are starting to see through their childish games of hide and seek. They want to hold the government accountable for these decisions, and this sentiment will continue to grow. They are getting tired of government that makes its decision behind closed doors when it thinks no one is looking.

Mr. Speaker, have you ever considered why this government chooses to sit only in the spring? By avoiding a fall session, or starting earlier in the year, they are avoiding accountability.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Now the hon. member from Saltcoats seemed to have stimulated a great deal of interest. And I note that both sides of the House are eager to get into debate and there will be plenty of opportunity to do that. But in the meantime, I ask all members to give their attention to the hon. member from Saltcoats.

(1545)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all the attention I'm getting from the members opposite. They don't want the Saskatchewan people to know what they're up to, and they don't want the opposition parties to question them about their poor choices. They are hoping that people will forget about all the broken promises they have broken throughout the rest of the year.

And in choosing to have session sitting when spring seeding is on shows nothing but contempt for rural members. The government even has one member who is allowed to continue teaching, but when it comes to members who farm, the government turns their back on them. But, Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is becoming accustomed to this treatment.

I'm sure the members opposite know that a fall sitting and a shorter spring session would cater to all parts of Saskatchewan. As a matter of fact, I'm sure several of those members would agree with me if they should be let say their piece.

But the government in its contempt of the Saskatchewan people

play the game so that they come out ahead. It's a wily strategy, Mr. Speaker, but it's not fair to Saskatchewan people. The NDP government may think it's winning the game but it forgets that it has no opponent in that case.

The people of this province are not supposed to be the government's enemy. But with the policies this government has established and with its sly actions, it seems like this is a point they have long since forgotten. For five years now they have been in power. When did they stop respecting the people, and better yet, did they ever respect the people? From their flippant answers in question period and their disregard for public protest, I seriously wonder. How many times have we seen the government members blatantly thumb their nose at the public will?

When people want to talk about utility rate increases, the minister responsible turns their back. When people want to talk about health, social, and education reforms, those ministers start pointing the finger anywhere but where it belongs — right back at themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for wide-ranging opinions on the greater implications of this Bill. If we had faith in this government, we would trust their opinions that it will indeed be a positive change. But, Mr. Speaker, this government has given us no reason to believe they have the best interests of Saskatchewan people in mind when they make any decision.

Maybe in this Bill they will have come up with a valid, decent amendment to The Land Titles Act, and maybe the changes are simply housekeeping ones and will have little effect on the people. But maybe they will have long-term, serious implications for the people of this province. And this is why I'm not willing to let this Bill pass along right now. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members opposite for their complete attention.

Ms. Draude: — I too am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the subject of Bill No. 58. This Bill, The Land Titles Amendment Act, 1996 contains significant changes to the law concerning how caveats are legally removed from certificates of title to land, and I have serious concerns about this.

The Speaker: — Order, order. The Speaker has erred in recognizing the hon. member who is not seated in her desk and cannot be recognized when not seated in her own desk.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. I believe that in the best interests of my constituents and of our constituency, I must address some of the concerns today.

Mr. Speaker, by introducing these changes, the government is signalling a major shift in philosophy. They are moving towards various ownership interests in land, stopping short of absolute ownership.

Of course this shouldn't surprise us. For some unknown and completely unacceptable reason, the government thinks it deserves ownership of everything in this province. It's not a government of, by, or for the people, it's a government that

rules in its own best interest, and of course absolute control is in your best interest.

Mr. Speaker, the present rules for lapsing caveats are in section 159 of The Land Titles Act. Under the present rules, the owner or person with an interest in the land must notify the person who registered the caveat, that the caveat will lapse after 30 days have passed.

The exception to this is when the caveator obtains and registers a judge's order extending the life of a caveat beyond 30 days. The government proposes to change that basic principle. Instead of the landowner having responsibility to send notices, it will be a public servant. In effect it will be the register of land titles for that particular land titles district where the land is located.

Mr. Speaker, this creates a lot more work for the staff of the Land Titles Office. Does the minister not know how long and inconvenient the registration of documents already is in land title offices? This provision will add a whole new set of duties to the list of duties for which land titles registrars are responsible.

Mr. Speaker, our detailed study of this has caused us to rethink the process and the result will almost surely be even longer delays in the registration of transfers and mortgages than is already the case.

Mr. Speaker, how many of the government back-benchers receive complaints from constituents about the length of time it takes to register a house transfer and mortgage at the Land Titles Office? Maybe they can't answer without fear of being muzzled by the Premier. But, Mr. Speaker, we receive those complaints and I'm sure those members opposite do as well.

I'm really curious to know how many of these members have actually responded and what they respond. We've tried to respond to our constituents over the last few months by telling them that the government may be bringing in a progressive amendment to The Land Titles Act which would speed up the process. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are certainly disappointed.

Like so many of the things this government does, this Bill is a poor choice for a solution. Instead of amendments which would speed up registration of documents, we see a whole new list of tasks and duties assigned to the registrar — duties which individual citizens used to accomplish quite efficiently in the past on their own. Those duties will now be taken over by the registrars and their staff. That means they will have less time to spend registering transfers and mortgages on homes, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings. And in turn this means that people will be waiting longer for services, even longer than they're waiting now.

Mr. Speaker, we should examine the shift in the duties and try to take a common sense approach and look for a better solution. I think this is a foreign concept to the NDP government. They've never actually considered looking for better solutions. Instead they get one idea in mind and stubbornly stick with it even if the people of this province do come up with a better

idea.

In case the members opposite were wondering, there's a concept out there called consultation. This is when the government asks people for the answers and then actually listens to them. I know this concept escaped the government for the past five years. Still, it's worth mentioning in case they start to look for valid solutions to the problems that have plagued our province under their administration.

Mr. Speaker, under the present rules of Bill No. 58, a landowner who wants to cause a caveat on his property to lapse must serve the required notice on the person who registered the caveat in one of two ways. The notice must be delivered personally or it may be sent by registered mail. If it is sent by registered mail then the notice must be mailed either to the address as shown on the caveat or the address shown on the last change of notice filed by the caveator.

Mr. Speaker, this all has to be changed. Instead of a simple system set out in the Act, such as I have described, the new system for notifying caveators will be set out in the regulations. The registrar, when he gets a request, will follow a new procedure. He will send out something called a notice in writing in the prescribed form, and he will arrange for it to be sent out in something called the prescribed method. Of course the word prescribed means prescribed in the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this comes across as a lot of mumbo jumbo legalese but the changes are there and it is our responsibility to make sure the government is making these changes for the people. Mr. Speaker, the personal service of notice to lapse a caveat is completely lost with this Bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is contrary to the whole point of a caveat. A caveat is a statement by a person claiming an interest in a piece of land. For example, when a person buys a parcel of land over time, under an agreement for sale he may put down a large down payment and agree to pay monthly instalment payments or annual instalment payments over time until a balance of the purchase price is paid. That type of purchaser is not yet the full owner of the land. He or she is a purchaser under an agreement for sale.

So, Mr. Speaker, what does he have on the title to prove his legal interest in this land? He certainly does not have his certificate of title in his own name. What he has is a caveat. He has a caveat which he can register on the title. It is an official endorsement on the back side of the certificate of title, warning everyone who might be interested in buying that piece of land that he or she is already in the process of buying it.

Mr. Speaker, the situations where one would want to erase that form of endorsement are few and far between. Why eliminate the requirement of personally serving the person who registered the caveat with a notice of intention to lapse the caveat? Why eliminate the certainty of either personal service or registered mail? Why replace that certainty with the uncertainty of a prescribed form sent out by a prescribed method.

Mr. Speaker, why is it that every time the government proposes

an amendment to a Bill we must wonder what the goals really are? This is, of course, assuming they have goals. Despite their actions I wouldn't want to assume their main goal is to break promises. There has to be more to it than that. There must be a reason that they want to take away more responsibility and power from ordinary citizens and place it in the hands of bureaucratic officials. This is not the direction which our citizens want to take, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how many times the government has to hear this before they start to understand.

Mr. Speaker, our citizens want certainty in the law. They want to handle as many of their own affairs as is reasonable. They don't want caveats which protect important ownership and other interests in land to be swept away by the sending of a prescribed notice sent in a prescribed method.

They don't want to find out that the prescribed method failed to reach the man or woman who has been paying money for the purchase of land and that the interest has been extinguished through an accident. Mr. Speaker, this is a bad provision of this Bill. It does nothing to protect people who may have put the better part of their life savings into the purchase of a piece of land. In fact it greatly lessens the protection for such people.

Mr. Speaker, there are still so many questions we have about this Bill. And before we can even begin to support it, we need many more answers. We want to give the members opposite a chance to explain their choices in this Bill because, as I have just pointed out, the reasons are far from clear. We just believe that we need some answers to our questions and I would hope the members opposite take our concerns seriously.

As members of this Legislative Assembly, we have the responsibility to make changes in legislation only if they are in the best interest of the people of this province. Period. It doesn't matter what side of the House we are on, or what our personal opinions are — we are here as elected representatives to make changes that will be beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan not only now, but for years to come. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a few minutes to share a few thoughts about Bill No. 58, An Act to amend The Land Titles Act. We've heard from the opposition that somehow the days that the session sits is related to The Land Titles Act; somehow or other we're starting our session too late or something like that, or insulting some of my rural colleagues. And I failed at that time to see how it was connected to the Bill and I'm still failing to see how it is.

But I do wish to point out that this Act to amend The Land Titles Act, what the government is simply trying to do, is to update the existing Land Titles Act, bring it into 1996. We are in the process of setting up to computerize the land titles transactions.

I've listened to opposition members decrying the amount of time it takes to get properties properly registered, which is particularly a bone of contention at a time of sale, if property is

changing ownership hands. All we're trying to do is to get Saskatchewan Land Titles into the 1996 mode as opposed to something significantly previous to that.

(1600)

I wish to point out to all who care to know, that this administration has got a committee process, an internal committee process, in place that is second to absolutely none in the universe. Our process, which has all member, government member, involvement but certainly has a component of rural, a component of urban, and a real good, cross mix, reviews every single Bill in detail. And we must agree to it in our own committee process and then in the government caucus before it can ever even appear on the floor here.

That's part of why Bills like The Land Titles Act generally have so few government members speaking to it on the floor of the legislature. I had my opportunity to speak to it before it got here. I had the legitimate concerns that we had with it already taken care of. We know what it is that we hope to accomplish with this.

There may in fact . . . I guess the best way I can put it is I would urge that we get on with passing this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that we get on with making it happen. But I do recognize that the opposition perhaps needs a bit more time to review it, and perhaps having heard some of my reasoned explanation, may feel more agreeable to passing it the next time around.

I've made the substantial comments that I wish to make. The process is a very good one. We have listened and heard from all members on this side of the House right across the province. We're simply updating the Act.

Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the opposition and their need to do further research, I move the adjournment of this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 24 — An Act respecting the Prescription of Pharmaceutical Agents and Contact Lenses

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, just for clarification here, I would like you to tell me, how do you plan to implement the changes that are required in this Act?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — There are two aspects to the Bill, as the member I'm sure knows. The first one says that an ophthalmic dispenser — that is the person who gives out glasses and contact lenses, as opposed to the optometrist who makes the prescription, or ophthalmologist who might make a prescription — the first aspect says that the ophthalmic dispenser can take a prescription, once a prescription has been made by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist, and from that prescription

can fit the consumer with contact lenses.

So that will just result from the passage of the Act, except that the by-laws of the optometrists' association will be amended, I understand, by the optometrists themselves to say that optometrists should release to the consumer a prescription for contact lenses. Presently they release prescriptions for eyeglasses — they're required to under their by-laws — but not contact lenses.

So there will be the statutory change that will say that the ophthalmic dispenser can give somebody contact lenses based upon a prescription. And then there will be a by-law change by the optometrists that will say that they, as a matter of professional responsibility, are obligated to give the consumer a prescription for contact lenses, as they presently have to do for eyeglasses. So that's the first aspect of the Bill.

The second part is an amendment to The Optometry Act that says that optometrists will be allowed to prescribe certain topical agents for use by their patients who have certain eye problems. And in terms of the implementation of that, the Act itself does not really say what they would end up prescribing, or under what circumstances, or exactly what training they would have to have to do this. The Act simply says that the practice of optometry means the performance of services including prescribing and dispensing . . . prescribing and using pharmaceutical agents. And the agents they would be allowed to prescribe would be set out in by-laws. This appears as the last, almost the last, clause of the Bill where it says one of the types of by-laws that the optometrists' association would come up with would be to:

“(1) prescribing the qualifications necessary for a member to prescribe and use those pharmaceutical agents that are designated in the bylaws made pursuant to clause (k) and authorizing the issue of a certificate to a member who is authorized to prescribe and use those pharmaceutical agents”.

So in other words the Act will say that, in certain circumstances, an optometrist could prescribe certain medications. The by-laws will say which optometrists can do that and which agents they would be allowed to prescribe.

Ms. Draude: — The by-laws are going to come into effect at the same time that the Act is?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. The by-laws would come into effect when they were written by the optometrists' association itself. And that would be subsequent to passage of the Act. What would be contemplated is that we would pass the Act, but nothing would change the day after we pass the Act because you would then have to write the rules that would say what optometrists could prescribe and which ones could do the prescribing.

And those rules would be set out in by-laws that would be written by the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists and when those would come into effect would depend upon how long it would take them to write those by-laws. In that process,

there would be a consultation between the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists and the college of physicians and surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and I suppose, the Department of Health.

And we would try to come to some kind of understanding with all those groups as to what was reasonable, although you may not have unanimity of opinion, and when you fashion the by-laws, when they came into effect, then the situation would change and the optometrist would actually start — in some cases — giving people a prescription for certain medications for certain eye conditions.

The Chair: — I see the minister has been joined by an official. I ask the minister to introduce that official, please.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair. This is Mr. Drew Johnston who's an officer of the Department of Health and works in this area.

Ms. Draude: — Welcome, Mr. Johnston. I don't want to be facetious but I'm just wondering, are you asking to have this Act passed and then you'll make the rest of the rules after?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, that actually is common practice. That is true for The Medical Profession Act, The Legal Profession Act. There are many, many professional statutes that say, these are the basic rules, and the profession itself can come up with by-laws — they're like regulations — and they're approved by government and they change from time to time.

So what the member says is correct. But this is nothing unusual. This is the common practice for this kind of legislation.

Ms. Draude: — For clarification again then, who will be included when they're making these regulations, or the by-laws. Will the ophthalmologists themselves be included in the discussions?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The optometrists themselves would formulate the by-laws. So in one sense, you're talking about the optometrists coming up with the by-laws. But for this type of by-law the approval of the minister is required; so that they can pass the by-law but then I have to approve the by-law.

And because I have to approve the by-law, I would require as a matter of common sense that the optometrists had consulted with the college of physicians and surgeons; the Saskatchewan Medical Association; perhaps, you know, the pharmaceutical association; and that there was a general consensus but not necessarily a unanimity of opinion.

The main factor would be the college of physicians and surgeons as the body that is mainly responsible for regulating matters as to who is competent to prescribe medication and so on. And so their approval would be almost a prerequisite. And you would want general agreement from a majority of other stakeholders.

So it would be a two-stage process. The optometrists would come up with the by-laws. I would have to be satisfied that the

community at large, as represented by organizations that would be interested in this area, had been consulted and that there was at least majority support for the change that they wanted to make. And if that was not the case, then it would be unlikely that the by-law would be approved at the government level.

Ms. Draude: — So the college of physicians and surgeons would have to have . . . you'd have to have their okay basically and then everybody else . . . If there's disagreement in there, then you would be the one that would make the final say on what by-laws are going to be going ahead or passed then.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's correct. And the law doesn't require that the college of physicians and surgeons would have to agree with what I was doing, but as a matter of common sense, I would look to them for some advice and guidance because they have more expertise in the area than I would have. And in terms of the legislation itself, for example, one of the things that guides us in formulating the legislation is that the college of physicians and surgeons is in support of the legislation.

If they were not in support of the legislation . . . I don't want to say that I would never, you know, do something that they didn't agree with because there might be some reason why you would, but generally speaking in an area like this their support or lack of support would be a very important indicator as to whether this was reasonable public policy.

(1615)

Ms. Draude: — Your area of expertise, Mr. Minister, is probably very broad but it's not specifically to ophthalmology or optometry. And I'm sure that from the amount of correspondence that we've had to our caucus that there seems to some varying degrees of opinion on whether this is right or wrong.

So I guess our main concern for the people in Saskatchewan is the final decision then lies in the hands of the minister who's . . . Do you rely on your guidance then from the college of physician and surgeons?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, that's correct. This is not unusual in the sense that throughout the health legislation — which would be dozens of pieces of legislation — there are many sections that say that the Minister of Health has to make a decision in matters that pertain to medical areas. And what is done normally is that I would consult with experts in the field and obtain advice as opposed to arriving at a decision all on my own.

At the end of the day, I would be responsible for the decision; but in making the decision, I would get advice from experts. And in this area we've done so in terms of the legislation and we would also do so in terms of the by-laws.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I wanted to refer to the minister that spoke on this the other day when we were talking about it, however he's not here. So I'll try to refer it to the Minister of Health.

When Ms. Draude . . . or I mean the member from Kelvington-Wadena asked the question, does that mean that there will be a requirement for additional training for some of these people, the member opposite said yes, in some cases that's right. This answer indicates to me that in some cases optometrists will not have to be trained. So in which cases would you assess that additional training will not be necessary?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — My understanding, and certainly what I contemplated, was that in fact all optometrists would have to be certified as having undergone extra training in order to be allowed to prescribe medications. But the amount of training might vary depending upon the optometrist.

For example, an optometrist who has been away from training, formal training, for quite some time might have to take a different and more complete sort of training than a recent graduate who might have taken some of the courses that would be required to prescribe as part of their formal training. But all optometrists would be required to take some kind of training, and they would have to be certified after examination that they were competent to prescribe.

So in other words, even after the Act is passed and the by-laws are passed, optometrists could not start prescribing. Optometrists would have to be certified under the by-laws as being competent to prescribe.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would just like to ask you who would be responsible for the certification, and would that in fact be certification that would come from the place of training — Waterloo, or where would the certification come from?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the certification would be by the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists, but the examination would be an examination of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. So there would be an examination at a national standard and once an optometrist had passed that examination, he or she would be certified by the provincial organization.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So would there be approval for certification by the Canadian body?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Not exactly, because the certification would be by the provincial body, but indirectly in the sense that the national body would be responsible for the examination and the applicant for certification would have to complete successfully an examination set by the national body before being certified by the provincial body.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does the national body have a criteria that is agreed upon by the optometrists and by the physicians and surgeons of Saskatchewan that would have to be passed in order for that certification to come into being?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The certification process would be set out in the by-laws that would be passed as a result of the passage of this legislation. But I'm advised that the examination would be administered by the national board of examiners in optometry.

And I can tell the member that my discussions with the college of physicians and surgeons are such that they are satisfied that there is an appropriate process in place for optometrists to be examined and certified under the proposed legislation.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the other day the Hon. House Leader on that side said that there is nothing specified in the by-laws, so how can we know what criteria are to be met if there is nothing specified in the by-laws?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the answer is that you don't at this stage, in the sense that we're passing the legislation. But we're not passing the by-laws because they're not passed in the legislature. And the by-laws can only be draft by-laws in fact until the legislation is passed because it would only be at that stage that there would be legal authority to pass by-laws in this area.

But there is a set of draft by-laws that has . . . I think there's actually been a couple of versions that have been circulated to the college of physicians and surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and I think probably the pharmaceutical association. If the member would like, I'm sure that we could send over a copy of the draft by-laws for the member also.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I'd appreciate that.

Again I'd like to refer to the House Leader from the opposite side. I'm making the mention that primary authority in Saskatchewan is the college of physicians and surgeons, and he goes on to quote a part of a paragraph:

Primary health care professionals provide first contact (with) health care. In respect to eye care citizens may consult either an optometrist or primary care physician. Both professions are well qualified to evaluate eye health status and detect eye disease.

So (he says) in Saskatchewan our primary reliance is upon the college. The college has said they're competent to do it.

It does note . . . I do note that it says here both professions . . . The optometrists are well qualified to evaluate and detect eye disease but nowhere does it say to treat it. And this does not seem to be a part of the quote at all; it comes from the physicians and surgeons. So I'd like you to answer to that please.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, I don't have the letter in front of me, so whether the quote in *Hansard* and the letter are exactly the same I can't say — although the House Leader assures me that he quoted it accurately — but I can tell the member that I have had discussions in person on more than one occasion with the registrar of the college of physicians and surgeons. And I have also corresponded with the registrar and he has advised me that the college is strongly supportive of this legislation and they believe that the prescription of topical medications by optometrists is well within the scope of expertise of optometrists. They have no objection whatsoever to the

legislation.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would refer again to the House Leader mentioning the other day that: I'm not sure that the Saskatchewan Medical Association are entirely in agreement.

And so I also notice that in this correspondence we have from the ophthalmological society of Alberta that it says the Saskatchewan section of ophthalmology has advised the government that this is not safe; ophthalmologists spend 12 years learning how to properly manage these eye diseases.

How can in fact this be a safe procedure even, you know, when only a small time for training is given?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the member may know that the Alberta legislature has passed legislation similar to this. It is true that the college of physicians and surgeons supports this legislation. The optometrist association obviously supports it. The pharmacists support it. The Saskatchewan Medical Association has reservations about the legislation. Those reservations . . . And of course I've met with the Saskatchewan Medical Association and representatives of the ophthalmologists about the legislation. They understand that we will be consulting with them in the formulation of the by-laws.

But the point I would make to the member, which the member may find of interest, is that there are very few ophthalmologists in Saskatchewan, or indeed anywhere in the country, in the sense of there being a lot of them. They're highly trained specialists, as they themselves say. You don't get ophthalmologists in rural Saskatchewan, for example.

And I would argue that the valid comparison here in terms of the ability to serve consumers is not so much between optometrists and ophthalmologists as between optometrists and family physicians. Because although it is true, as the member just indicated, that the optometrists do not have the same training with respect to diseases of the eye that the ophthalmologist have, they do have equivalent and usually better training with respect to diseases of the eye and treatment than the average general practitioner.

Not taking anything away from the general practitioner, but one of the objectives of the legislation is to say that if you live in an area of the province that does not have an ophthalmologist, which would be quite common, and indeed if there is a waiting list to see an ophthalmologist, which would be quite common in both Saskatchewan and anywhere else in the country, or indeed North America, then there may be situations where an optometrist could very usefully treat an eye condition for a person in a rural area where that person wouldn't have access to an ophthalmologist.

So the point would be, it's fine to talk about ophthalmologists, but if a person is not going to be able to see an ophthalmologist, it's an academic question. And what we're trying to do, and this is supported by the college of physicians and surgeons, is to say that there may be instances where we can make better use of the

skills and abilities of optometrists, particularly in rural areas, who could very usefully help people with certain eye conditions.

And in terms of defining exactly when and under what circumstances they could do so, we would want to consult with the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) and the ophthalmologists as well as the other groups that I've mentioned.

(1630)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could just let me know how many ophthalmologists we have in this province.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm not sure, but I believe the number is about 21 and that they are centred only in large centres; I think perhaps Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Lloydminster. But I met with the ophthalmologists, or representatives of them, and it seems to me that the number was something like 21. But if not 21, it would be close to that.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, could you advise me what the length is of the course that the optometrists will be required to take to receive the training they'll need to prescribe the treatment that is now given by the ophthalmologist?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That would vary, for the reasons I indicated earlier, in the sense that if somebody just graduated from Waterloo and had taken the training, they wouldn't be required to take it again.

But if they hadn't taken any training, under the draft by-laws one requirement is that they would have successfully completed a course in the use of therapeutic pharmaceutical agents consisting of at least 60 hours of academic instruction and 40 hours of clinical instruction delivered by a school or college of optometry approved by the board of examiners.

So about a hundred hours of instruction, which of course would be over some, I would think, considerable period of time, in the sense that these are busy people. So that would be, generally speaking, what they have in mind for the by-laws.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The range of topical drugs that are to be distributed by the optometrists, is a list of them going to be made available to the public?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The list would be made in the process of coming up with the by-laws and also in consultation with the various groups I've mentioned, such as the college of physicians and surgeons, the SMA, and the pharmaceutical association. And I can't say to the member exactly what the list would be, because that's what would come out of the consultation process, or one of the things that would come out of it. And the list would be set out in the by-laws. It would also be set out in regulations under The Pharmacy Act.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Will pharmacists

have the authority to refuse to fill a prescription from an optometrist if they feel that it's not one that should be prescribed?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think that generally speaking if a pharmacist received a prescription from a physician or an optometrist within an area that the physician or optometrist is qualified to prescribe, then I don't think the pharmacist would, you know, question the authority of the physician or the optometrist unless there was some obvious error, in which case, I think the pharmacist would contact the optometrist, just as a pharmacist might contact a physician in that kind of circumstance, to clarify or confirm that what was written was actually meant.

But generally speaking, I don't think a pharmacist would be second-guessing either a physician or an optometrist, except in some cases where there was an indication that something was clearly wrong.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Minister. When do you anticipate that these changes will come into place?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We would expect changes to come into place during the latter part of this year.

Ms. Draude: — Do you anticipate there will be economic growth in the field of contact lens dispensaries due to the changes in this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It's difficult to predict but the experience in Alberta, where a similar change was made with respect to prescription of the contact lenses, was that competition was increased for the consumer. So whether or not the overall level of business would increase, I don't know. It is thought that pricing would be more competitive.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to thank Mr. Drew Johnston for his assistance this afternoon.

Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me deputy minister Stuart Kramer; director of wildlife, Dennis Sherratt; and Doug Kosloski, legislative analyst for the policy and public involvement branch of the department.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also, Mr. Minister, like to welcome your staff here today. The last time that we had committee we actually exhausted all our

questions that we had of your people or yourself, Mr. Minister, so I'll turn it over to the third party.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Seated to my right is Ron Davis, assistant deputy minister of Municipal Government. And behind Mr. Davis is Perry Erhardt, who is a policy analyst with the department as well.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to, Mr. Minister, welcome the officials here today. We don't have a whole lot of questions, Mr. Minister, but we do have a few. The first one possibly being, could you explain the first amendment that would have been passed to us, An Act to amend or repeal Miscellaneous Statutes concerning Municipal Government?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm going to read some comments which were prepared and I think will probably be more tightly woven than anything I might add.

When we originally planned to amend this section of The Hospital Revenue Act, we anticipated only a name change. However more recently it was determined that another change to The Hospital Revenue Act is required. The proposed amendment is necessary to avoid a potential problem associated with equalized assessments, an area with which I'm sure none of us are very familiar. I'm sure that's true, actually.

Essentially, in years when SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) was not obligated by its legislation to generate equalized assessment figures, the total taxable assessment, usually the same number, will be used for the purposes of The Hospital Revenue Act. This will not result in higher taxes but will simply ensure that taxes may continue to be levied in years where no equalized assessment is calculated.

(1645)

A recent decision by SAMA changed their previous policy of generating equalized assessment figures in every year. Because they don't have to prepare those numbers every year, they have chosen not to for 1995; '95 assessment figures are relied upon for the 1996 levy.

The amendment does not change our commitment to work over the coming year with municipalities in search of a practical way of removing this levy from the property tax base altogether.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Going further into the Bill, The House Building Assistance Act, can you tell us when the last time this Act was used and if so, what grants that were used to distribute?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The figure I'm given is 1983.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Can you . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Minister, but there was a second part to that question. What grants were used to distribute at that time, in 1983? What were the last grants distributed through this Act?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The grants distributed at that time were the Build-A-Home Saskatchewan program.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. The Local Improvements Act, 1993, can you explain the reasons for changes to that part of the Act?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This cures an administrative problem which had arisen. I think it will be clear when I finish this explanation.

The amendment makes it clear that the assessor shall consider all petitions together — sometimes it's one; there may be twenty filed — when he or she certifies the validity of the petitions and determines whether the required percentage of signatures have been attained, etc. So it considers them all together, and then the 21-day limit within which the assessors provide a decision begins running from the date of the most recently filed decision. So he or she may consider them together, then the 21-day period begins to run from the last one. Otherwise the 21-day period might begin to run from the first when you haven't had an opportunity to consider the last one. So that's the clarity.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act — and I think this is straightforward; I just need some clarification on it. And I think we definitely agree with it. Is this retroactive? Like does this go back a number of years? Am I reading this right?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, this is retroactive. It goes back to the period when the park opened in '91. And I think the reasons for that are relatively obvious. It goes back retroactive '91.

Mr. Bjornerud: — One of the other concerns I have, Mr. Minister, is The Assessment Management Agency Act. What is the purpose of this change?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They're exempting it from publication in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*. The cost would be quite staggering. The cost is \$105 per page. This weighty tome . . . the Gettysburg Address is about 3 or 400 words in length; however, this one is 2,275 pages. Thus the cost of printing this in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*, never mind the cost of distributing the thing, would be \$238,875. So rather than run all that up, the thing has just been exempted from publication in the *Gazette*.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, that makes sense to me. But the one concern that I have is how will we adequately get people accessed to this now? What procedure will be taken?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I should have explained that. The assessment manual will be available for public viewing. Members of the public can make copies of it all if they want, on payment of a fee. But they're much more likely to make copies of a few pages. So the notice will be given when it's available. It'll be open for public inspection, and members of the public can make copies of the document.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions. On one of the amendments that was just given to us, clause 16, subsection (b)(3), says that Act will come into force upon assent, but is retroactive. Can you explain to me the importance of making it retroactive?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This relates to the equalized assessment. It's retroactive to January 1 so that it applies to the whole year and not a part of a year. So it's retroactive to January 1 so that the provision with respect to equalized assessment applies to the whole of the calendar year which is the year for purpose of assessment.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just have one more question, section 6, I guess it is, clause 2(b). It says:

The Grain Charges Limitation Act is repealed and the following substituted:

“... charges securing payment of moneys to the Government of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan or a . . . municipality”.

Could you just explain that part to me, please?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — If you look at the explanatory notes, it might assist you. The section used to refer to local improvement districts. They've been disbanded for many years and thus this simply drops the reference to local improvement districts.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Really that brings to an end the questions we have, Mr. Minister, unless there's something else within this Bill, the changes that you would like to bring to our attention.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, the rest are all truly miscellaneous. They're simply references to nomenclature and so on.

Clause 1 agreed to

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 7

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was just brought to my attention that the Tories had some questions referring to

this, and I think it was on clause 4 or 5, I'm not quite sure, so we would maybe want to turn that over to them if they're willing to speak on it.

Clause 7 agreed to

Clause 8

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There's a House amendment to this thing.

I don't know if members of the opposition have copies of this. I don't know whether it's necessary to read this or not. If it isn't, I'll simply refer to the document you have. I move the amendment, a copy of which has been provided to the Table and a copy of which has been provided to the official opposition, and I move it.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that:

Clause 8 of the printed Bill

1 Strike out clause 8 of the printed Bill and substitute the following:

(1) *The Hospital Revenue Act* is amended in the manner set forth in this section.

(2) Section 5 is amended by striking out “The Minister of Urban Affairs” **and substituting** “Subject to subsection 12(1) of *The Assessment Management Agency Act*, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency”.

(3) Section 6 is amended:

(a) in subclause (a)(i) by adding “, if it has been prepared, or if no equalized assessment has been prepared, on the total taxable assessment of the municipality as confirmed by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency for the next preceding year” **after** “preceding year”; **and**

(b) in subclause (a)(ii) by adding “, if it has been prepared, or if no equalized assessment has been prepared, on the total taxable assessment of the municipality as confirmed by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency in that portion of the municipality for the next preceding year” **after** “preceding year”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 16

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move clause 16 of the printed Bill be amended:

2 Amend Clause 16 of the printed Bill:

(a) in subsection (1) by striking out “subsection (2)” and substituting “subsections (2) and (3)”; and

(b) by adding the following subsection after subsection (2):

“(3) Section 8 of this Act comes into force on assent, but is retroactive and is deemed to have been in force on and from January 1, 1996”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16 as amended agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move the Bill be reported with amendment. While I'm on my feet, in my capacity as House Leader, I'll move this committee rise, report very considerable progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 24 — An Act respecting the Prescription of Pharmaceutical Agents and Contact Lenses

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

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

Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act

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

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

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move the amendments be now read a first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — With leave, I move the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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