

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. 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 on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Southey, Cupar, Earl Grey, and Regina. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding closure of 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 communities the people have signed from are Regina, Indian Head, Balgonie, Milestone, and Viscount.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to present petitions of names from Saskatchewan residents regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. 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 cities of Weyburn and Regina.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well 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.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina.

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

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

Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition are mostly from Regina, but also from Lumsden.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition once again is a number of concerned citizens from the city of Regina.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 58 ask the government the following questions:

Minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation regarding the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, known as CCTA in this document:

1. What dollar value of total Crown projects works has come under the CCTA since it was announced on March 3, 1995?
2. How many CCTA projects and with what total volume have been tendered in urban areas, i.e., population centres over 5,000, where the eligible projects are greater than \$50,000 in size; how many non-union contractors have been awarded work on such projects, and how many non-union employees have been actually working on these CCTA projects in urban areas?
3. How many CCTA projects and with what total volume have been tendered in rural areas where the eligible projects are greater than \$150,000 in size; how many non-union contractors have been awarded work on such projects, and how many non-union employees have been actually working on the CCTA projects in rural areas?
4. In total, what percentage of all person-years of construction jobs on CCTA-covered projects since March 3, 1995 have been non-union?

5. As a result of the CCTA's required pro-union hiring sequence, and in light of the limited number of unionized contractors and employees in the province, i.e., less than 20 per cent of the entire construction sector, how many contractors and workers on CCTA projects over the last year came from out-of-province?
6. On average, compared to similar-sized projects prior to the CCTA, what has been the estimated percentage increase in project costs covered by this agreement?
7. Many unionized contractors who work on Crown projects covered by the CCTA can undertake name hiring whereas non-union contractors under this agreement cannot and must accept whatever is sent by the union from their out-of-work list. How many name-hired unionized employees have been working on CCTA projects since this agreement was announced?
8. How many unionized employees who have worked on CCTA projects over the past year have been hired from outside of the major cities of Regina and Saskatoon; what percentage of total unionized labour on CCTA projects would this represent?
9. The CCTA established a new group called the Construction Opportunities Development Council, CODC, to create, support, and promote programs to continually enhance the unionized construction product. Who is on this council and especially, what have been their activities over the last year, or will they be required to soon publicly release an annual report on these activities?
10. The agreement requires every contractor on a CCTA project to pay 21 cents per hour worked in extra fees, an extra 5 cents per hour has gone to the building trades union, 10 cents per hour has gone to the unionized employers' group, CLR (Construction Labour Relations Association), and an extra 6 cents an hour has gone to a special fund to finance the work of this new CODC mentioned in the previous question. All of these extra fees are ultimately borne by the Crown corporations through contract payments. On behalf of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, how much revenue through these extra fees has been collected under the CCTA since March 3, 1995 for (a) the CLR, (b) the SPBCTA, and (c) the CODC fund? In each of these accounts, how has the money been spent?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce two very special people in my life, my daughter Tammy and my granddaughter Marissa Danielle. Tammy has been nursing in Texas the past two and a half years and now is employed at the Provost Hospital. Please help me welcome them not only to this Assembly, but back to the

province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce and welcome two members and representatives of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, we have Robert Doucette, you know from around Saskatoon, but also Dale MacAuley from Cumberland House. Mr. Speaker, I would like all people to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I see seated in the west gallery is a person whose name is synonymous with libraries and development of libraries in Saskatchewan. I refer to Mr. George Bothwell, and I would ask the members to wish him a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Marriage of Member for Meadow Lake

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend best wishes to the member from Meadow Lake on his wedding this afternoon. It is quite obvious that he's volunteered to spend a lot of time working rather closely with one particular government official, and it seems to have paid off because she has now agreed to be his bride.

When I found out that the nuptials were going to be held in this building, Mr. Speaker, I thought that the plans fit rather nicely into the member's goal not to miss a paid day at work. When the ceremony reaches a point where it's asked if anyone objects to this marriage, I have the solemn promise of our caucus that there will be no heckling.

I, however, will not be responsible for the members of the government who know the member from Meadow Lake much better than I.

While I would have difficulty wishing long life and prosperity to this government, I have no hesitancy, on behalf of my colleagues, to extend best wishes to this couple.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passing of Michael Osika

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a day of both joy and sorrow. I believe this is the first member's statement I've made in this Assembly. I regret the occasion upon which I give it.

Just shortly before entering the Assembly, I learned of the untimely death of the brother of the Leader of the Opposition, and I want to express on behalf of all members of the Assembly our sincere condolences.

I did not know Michael Osika but I understand that the Leader of the Opposition and his brother were close and were an aid and a comfort to each other, and hopefully those memories will be a comfort to you in the days ahead. Please accept our condolences.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

World Record for House Demolition

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mind over matter is a phrase we often hear. On Saturday, May 11, 15 male and female members of the Aurora Karate Club from Watson, Englefeld, St. Brieux, and Prince Albert combined mind and body in their successful attempt to break the *Guinness Book of World Records* for demolishing a house. They accomplished the feat by using their hands and feet to demolish a seven-room house in Watson in just three hours, six minutes, and 50 seconds.

The karate club instructor, Wolfgang Manicke, was the organizer of the latest assault on the world's record. The Watson Karate Club members vigorously attacked the house and it became quite evident they were well on their way to smashing the old record. However, less than two hours into the demolition, a gas leak was triggered by a falling wall and time out had to be taken while SaskEnergy plugged the leak. The delay dashed some of the club's momentum, but they still managed to set a new record.

The club was then joined by three more members who tried setting a record for demolishing six buildings in one day. They have now set the benchmark by which other records will be measured.

Mr. Assembly, I would ask the members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Watson Karate Club on setting a new world record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Head Start Program

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with Child Care Week I believe my statement is timely.

In many ways the most important years in the education of a child are the preschool years, the years when kids are prepared to learn. If they are comfortable in the school setting they will learn. If they are somehow made to feel like outsiders they won't learn. The teachers among us in this Assembly know this for a fact.

So I am pleased to recognize a new program in my constituency, in the city of Lloydminster. The program is called the Aboriginal Head Start Program and it is sponsored and operated by the Border City Metis Society. The ideas behind this program is quite simple and vital. It will give children ages three to four, who are about to enter kindergarten, a head start into school. The students will be taught basic skills which will help them feel good about themselves, and more importantly, it

will encourage the attitude that the school experience is a positive one.

And, Mr. Speaker, the program also recognizes that parents often need to be educated so they can assist their children to be educated. The focus is on children and parents preparing for kindergarten. Classes will be offered on parenting, budgeting, and nutrition. As well there will be cultural and other educational workshops.

This is a good idea and I congratulate Myrtle Racette, president of the Border City Metis Society, for creating Head Start in Lloydminster.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cathedral Village Arts Festival

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituency of Regina Centre is distinctive for many reasons, but one that I'm most proud of is the intense feeling of community that we cling to within the larger city. Regina Centre is truly, in the best sense of the word, a village and our village is happy to announce its annual Cathedral Village Arts Festival. The festival begins on Queen Victoria's observed birthday, it ends the day after her actual birthday, and it has nothing to do with the Queen. However, the dates for this year's festival are May 20 to 25.

And as the festival's advertising flyer says, "art and community, hand in hand; that's what makes the Cathedral area of Regina special," and the village arts festival is our annual public demonstration of this.

As Co-Chair of the art committee, I've worked with a group of artists to bring two new, exciting events to the festival. One is called YART, where various people, some of whom are artists, will be creating small theme parks in their yards. And the tour of YART will also include 12 pieces of public art in the area. The art show, called "Hung Out to Dry," includes any work of art which can be hung from a clothesline.

Music, art, dance, food, and a street bazaar will fill out the week. Tour maps and festival schedules are available at the Cathedral Community Centre and throughout the neighbourhood.

So please join us — it's a short drive from Moose Jaw — in this annual celebration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Kinsmen International Band and Chorale Festival

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with members three very good reasons for visitors, or honeymooners, to come to Moose Jaw this weekend. Mr. Speaker, of course it wouldn't be spring if the Moose Jaw Kinsmen International Band and Chorale Festival did not occur.

This weekend the 46th annual festival will proudly take place in our community: 23 concert bands, 15 choirs, 8 jazz combos, and 5 jazz bands will entertain us both Thursday and Friday evenings at Peacock auditorium and at open-air concerts on Main Street on Saturday afternoon.

And, Mr. Speaker, this weekend, folks can head up to the Hillcrest Sports Centre on Main Street for our ParkArt 95 annual arts and crafts festival, featuring a wide variety of high quality, original crafts, works of art, along with more music and entertainment.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, for those visitors and honeymooners who would want to enjoy a pleasant stroll around our historic downtown, there's always the chance to check out our giant 26 outdoor murals. Only in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, can visitors combine these three first-rate attractions in one weekend.

Soon, Mr. Speaker, as you know, our visitors will be able to explore the historic tunnels of Moose Jaw and to experience the geothermal waters of the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa. Mr. Speaker, our city is on the move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Green School

Ms. Hamilton: — Spring is finally here, and the best way I could think of celebrating its long-anticipated arrival was to be present yesterday at the W.F. Ready School in my constituency as it received a special honour.

W.F. Ready School is now a green school, one of 21 schools in Regina that have reached this milestone. For the past three months, the entire school worked together to complete over 100 projects, from planting trees, caring for lawns, to art displays and designing T-shirts.

The importance of these projects was to spread the word about protecting the environment to others in their community. Parents and siblings gathered with the whole school at a morning assembly that was organized by Cheryl Ganong. To cheer them on, there were green cheerleaders, the Clean Cat Rapper, Sonia Erb, and the junior choir, which sang three songs, one of which was an adaptation of "I Love Trash."

To conclude the wonderful assembly, we all joined in to sing an adaptation of "This Land is Your Land." We then all reconvened outdoors to plant a tree to commemorate the occasion. I would like to extend a word of thanks to principal, John Matity, vice-principal, Rick Orban, the students, teachers, staff, and parents, who are all doing their part to promote the three R's: reduce, recycle, and reuse.

Thanks also go to Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management. Mr. Speaker, to see those smiling faces we all know that the future of our environment is indeed in good hands. Congratulations to Hawrylak School. Keep green.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a leaked memo confirmed this week what the Liberal opposition has been saying for months. Saskatchewan residents heard the smoke and mirrors story behind this NDP (New Democrat Party) government's Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

They learned of a leaked memo from the Economic Development department that warned that the NDP should scrap this policy before it started. They heard how this government, in spite of these warnings, proceeded with a plan that discriminates against non-union firms and has robbed the taxpayers of Saskatchewan of millions of dollars.

Mr. Minister, newspaper articles now appeared in *The Calgary Herald* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* this week telling people in other provinces of this government's actions. Will the Minister of Labour explain what message he believes this sends to bona fide construction firms who may now be scared away from bidding on projects in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the labour environment in Saskatchewan was much poisoned by years of disrespect by the members opposite before we came to office in 1991. We worked with the construction industry and with the labour unions and with people in government to try to establish a fair basis from which contracts could be tendered in this province. And I can tell you our intent is to continue to operate to establish a fair and open place for workers and business in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, this government spouts rhetoric about doing what is in the best interests of Saskatchewan taxpayers. They speak constantly about the fact that they are pursuing economic and business investment in this province. However, the facts speak louder than their hollow words. While this government attempts to lure investment to Saskatchewan, they're sending signals which indicate that they are arrogant, irresponsible, and don't know how to conduct business properly, and that's putting it mildly.

Mr. Speaker, word spreads fast in the business community, and the reputation of this government has been poisoned. Does the minister not understand that potential economic and business investment is threatened as long as the CCTA exists? Will the minister make a commitment in this House today to scrap this union preference policy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Members opposite, Mr. Speaker, are acquiring the same flair for inconsistency that the old government used to have. A couple of days ago in the House, I

believe I remember the members opposite complaining about a Manitoba contractor getting the low tender on a SaskTel bid in Saskatchewan. Today he is saying Manitoba contractors are offended by the policy. I can tell you that the policy is established to establish a fair basis for cooperation.

But when it comes to chasing jobs away from Saskatchewan, I would think the members opposite ought to feel thoroughly ashamed by the response they've given to one of Saskatchewan's industries, which is Crown Life here, when the members opposite have the audacity to stand in this House and criticize government policy; when they have irresponsibly spoken about a sound Saskatchewan company because they wanted to get cheap political press. I can tell you the public can read through your insincerity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Student Summer Employment

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this government has budgeted almost \$900,000 for the 1996 Partnerships summer employment program. It is my understanding that almost 1,800 applications were received before the April 15 deadline. Will the Minister of Economic Development tell this House whether the funding which has been dedicated for the partnership program will enable all the applicants to hire students for this summer?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the fact that we have received more applications than we're able to process with the funds that we have allocated for that purpose. It would seem that the program is fully subscribed and that we're simply not able to meet the demand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this House is aware that last year the government had originally committed \$900,000 to the partnership program, but during the election year the application deadline was extended by more than one month, to May 24, and an additional \$1 million was approved for the program.

In this non-election year, is the minister prepared to make the same commitment in this House today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, it is foolish of course for the member to suggest that the election had anything to do with it. The fact of the . . . The member finds that funny. I don't frankly see the humour.

The fact of the matter is that we are coping with a budgetary problem in 1996 that simply wasn't with us in 1995. And the reason for it is your cousins in Ottawa.

Now we have squeezed and scrimped and saved to try and back-fill the federal cut-backs as they relate to health, as they relate to post-secondary education, and as they relate to social

welfare, and we just simply don't have the money to supplement a successful program, as we have. And the member can accept that in spite of her obvious cynicism.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After an answer like that, it's going to be hard to get serious. But, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan).

Mr. Minister, the president of one of Saskatchewan's largest employers has now joined in condemning your union-preference tendering policy. IPSCO president, Roger Phillips, says, and I quote:

Only a biased person could view this machiavellian deprivation of individual rights as fair. The CCTA is unfair to individual workers and a crass example of government pandering to special interests with no benefit to the general public.

He goes on to say:

The Saskatchewan people deserve answers to a couple of questions. What extra money, what extra cost, did the typical Crown project cost and face? And was it as high as 30 per cent, foreseen by its own Economic Development department? And how many rural, non-union workers lost their jobs?

Mr. Minister, I know that you don't want to answer these kind of questions for the opposition because we've asked them before, but perhaps you would be kind enough to answer these questions for one of the more important presidents and one of our province's leading corporate citizens.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — As the member opposite would know, as one of the people that created the environment in which unrest prevailed in Saskatchewan between the government and labour and between business and labour, the member opposite would recognize that one of the representatives of business in that debate is the member he is quoting.

There are other points of view about how relationships should exist. But I want to say to the member opposite that we have worked very hard to create a good relationship between workers and management in this province. We have engaged a public review, and I hope Mr. Phillips took the time to respond to the review of the Crown Tendering Agreement.

As I said to the members opposite just a few days ago, we have a meeting arranged with Mr. McLauchlan from the Saskatchewan Construction Association. The discussions continue about how these policies and relationships can be improved, and we continue to engage both workers and business in establishing a good business climate here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Changes to Labour Standards

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, your remarks seem to be contradicted this morning by the president of SaskPower who, in fact, admitted that people were working during the 1980s in the Power Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Economic Development minister. Mr. Minister, Roger Phillips also says that your government may be dedicating more lip-service than action to your *Partnership for Growth* economic strategy. He says departments other than Economic Development won't buy into the plan, and bureaucrats in the Labour department have bowled through a myriad of anti-competitive, business-strangling regulations and policies. That's pretty strong language, but it's true and this is what he said.

And of course the unions preference policy is one example of this, as we saw from that leaked document. Another example is the NDP (New Democratic Party) changes to The Labour Standards Act.

Mr. Minister, you have made a commitment to reduce government regulations by 25 per cent, and yet we have not seen this happening to date. Will you live up to this commitment by supporting the private members' Bill I will introduce later today to repeal some of your more oppressive changes to The Labour Standards Act?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question as it was finally stated, I suspect we will determine how we vote when we see what is proposed.

With respect to the state of the Saskatchewan economy, I think the members opposite themselves would acknowledge, as many people who used to support the members opposite would acknowledge, that the New Democratic government since 1991 has done a far superior job of creating a business climate in Saskatchewan in which both workers and business want to stay. And there's much more respect for the financial and economic management in this government than yours will ever see again in this century. So I think that speaks for itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gaming Addiction Help-line

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the gambling minister. Mr. Minister, a news report last night indicated your gambling hot-line is not . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I will ask the hon. member to direct the question to a minister responsible for a portfolio and to define the portfolio according to the title that the minister holds. So if you would just rephrase to which minister you're directing your question.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, my question is for the minister in charge of Gaming. The news report says that people are very

often unable to get through, and when they get through they usually get an answering service, and very often no one phones back. Now this time we can't blame it on SaskTel.

Mr. Minister, this is simply unacceptable. When a person gets to the point of actually reaching out for help, they need that help, and they need it right now. They don't need to be playing telephone tag for several days.

Mr. Minister, we've already seen that calls to your gambling line have increased dramatically since the opening of the Regina casino. I think we need a little less effort milking your new cash cow and a little more effort helping people that are looking for help. What steps are you taking to correct these problems with your gambling line and ensure that people who need help get help?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, it is true that when people phone the gambling hot-line, of course occasionally the counsellors are on line with other people. So it does happen that the counsellor is not immediately available. I think most fair-minded and reasonable people would understand that, Mr. Speaker.

If the help-line staff are out of the office or on an emergency call or talking to somebody, the callers can leave their name and number for a call-back, or in an emergency they can stay on the line and have the crisis worker paged by the answering service. People understand, Mr. Speaker, that the counsellors are not always available on a moment's notice.

I want to say that the number of calls has increased because we've been encouraging people to call if they do have problems with gambling or if they need information, Mr. Speaker. And we're taking a very responsible approach, trying to make sure that people who may have a gambling problem get help — something that, for nine years, the party with which the member's associated never took any steps to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Investments Corporation President's Furniture Expenditures

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During those nine years, there were also no full-time casinos.

Mr. Speaker, shortly after the NDP took office, we learned that Jack Messer had spent \$27,000 renovating his office, making it soundproof and putting in a private bathroom.

Apparently Mr. Messer wasn't the only friend of the Premier with expensive tastes. We've now learned that Don Ching also thought he needed to do some redecorating as the president of CIC. He spent \$3,500 of taxpayers' money on a new credenza; \$6,000 on a new desk; \$16,000 on a new wall unit, and it sure doesn't sound like he was shopping at The Brick. Mr. Speaker, including PST (provincial sales tax), Don Ching spent 34,823 taxpayers' dollars on new furniture while his tenure at CIC.

To the minister responsible for CIC: Mr. Minister, do you think it's appropriate that Don Ching should spend almost \$35,000 of taxpayers' money on office furniture during this time of restraint?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the members opposite that I'm not a great furniture buyer so I don't know what the value of things is, but to an old farm boy it sounds like lots of money for furniture.

My understanding is that that furniture was purchased in agreement with the owner of the facility in which CIC is housed. They wanted to retain CIC as a client but needed to renovate the facility as well, as CIC was occupying their space. And part of their agreement to continue the lease agreement with CIC was to provide compensation for the furniture that was needed to update the president's office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the minister would then supply a copy of that lease.

My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, during your half-hour infomercial back in February, you said your government's commitment to spending cuts and restraint would start at the top. Yet we continue to see example after example of people, like people . . . where Don Ching, at the highest level of your government, is exempted from this restraint.

Mr. Premier, what do you plan to do to address this problem? Do you think it's appropriate that your friend and your new hand-picked SaskTel president should spend \$35,000 on office furniture while he was the president of CIC?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite needed to get through his list of questions. I'd like to repeat the answer which he seems to be calling for again — that there was an agreement between the owner of the building and CIC that they would be compensated for the cost of upgrading the president's office. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Legislation

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government continues to tinker with SaskPower. This government is proposing that SaskPower employees have the right to enter private residences without permission in almost any circumstances. In other words, any time the cabinet sees fit.

How can you explain this? Even our police don't have this kind of sweeping power. Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for SaskPower tell this House if Jack Messer is working overtime to draft this government's legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say to the member opposite that yes, Jack Messer does do a lot of

overtime work, as does the rest of the management team. They have had a very particularly busy year with respect to restructuring. So do we get enough hours out of the executive team over there? The answer is yes.

With respect to the legislation that is before this House that you refer to, you and I will have the opportunity to discuss this clause by clause, and I will be very happy to explain to you why, for safety reasons, this legislation is required.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, that's not the only problem with SaskPower. The government wants to give Jack Messer more power. It wants to give him more freedom to spend taxpayers' money. Instead of Jack Messer getting approval for spending over \$1 million on a transaction, they want to let him make that decision without getting an order in council from cabinet.

Mr. Minister, with every decision this government makes, they are moving further and further away from public accountability. This is a sign of an arrogant government. Mr. Minister, will you please explain why Jack Messer no longer has to be accountable to the public when they decide to spend taxpayers' money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than pleased to answer that for the member. The fact of the matter is the legislation and the amendment to the legislation would put SaskPower in the same position as every other Crown corporation, in that an expenditure of that amount would not be done unilaterally by anyone within that corporation. But it would come to the board of directors who are represented from people from throughout this province — people who understand the nature of the industry, as you quite clearly don't.

The reason that this is being introduced is so that the corporation will have the flexibility to make timely decisions in the new environment that it finds itself in — the new, deregulated environment that you and the Tory caucus have supported in the 1980s.

I want to say that we will continue to run this corporation in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, and I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that we can do it, I think, quite capably without the help from critic's criticism when he knows full well that this can be debated and discussed in the legislation that's before the House. I wish the member would take the time to understand and learn the process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Overhead Power Lines

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as farmers in Saskatchewan prepare for spring seeding, many are receiving a letter and stickers from SaskPower president, Jack Messer. He reminds producers of the safety risks associated

with spring seeding. In particular, he notes that four deaths resulted from contact with power lines between 1991 and '95.

Will the minister in charge of SaskPower indicate why his government eliminated the RUD (rural underground distribution) program, a program that is proven to save lives, if in fact they recognize that overhead power lines are such a big safety concern?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I find it really interesting that the member would bring this question to the House during question period when we had two hours this morning at which he could have asked the cost of the program, what kind of public feedback we had, and whether or not it was appropriate to make people aware of the fact that overhead lines can in fact cause deaths on the farm.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of questioning really does interest me, given the fact that he knows that there were four deaths from overhead lines last year, that we are trying to create awareness within the people of rural Saskatchewan. We will continue to do that because we think it's a very worthwhile program. And instead of nit-picking, silly questions, I wish the member would stand up and recognize the fact that this is a very good awareness program and support some of the positive initiatives that are done by the corporation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I asked part of these same questions this morning, and I didn't like the answer this morning, so I thought I'd try it again, but I don't like it any better this afternoon. It didn't get any better.

Mr. Speaker, the people who populate our rural areas question the value of a letter to warn them of a danger of overhead power lines. A letter and stickers are not going to save lives, but the rural underground power program has proven it can and does save lives. Rural people are waiting for the minister and this government to demonstrate that they are the defender of Saskatchewan families, not only the Saskatchewan family of Crown corporations.

Aside from the safety element, the RUD program also resulted in full-time, well-paying jobs in rural Saskatchewan, and was a more cost-effective way of maintaining our power lines. Will the minister send a message to the farming families of this province telling them that their lives are more important than finances and re-establish the RUD program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the signal and the message that I want to send to the people of Saskatchewan — that is, on a daily basis the Liberal opposition stand in this House and ask the government to spend more and more money at the same time their colleagues in Ottawa are cutting back in funding to the tune of a hundred million-plus for health, education, and social services.

That's the message, Mr. Speaker, that I want to send to the people of Saskatchewan. As well I'd like to send a message to the people that this caucus is doing more to destroy business and to destroy opportunities for jobs in this province, and Crown Life is a good example. And I ask the members of that side of the House to sit down and take stock of themselves and be a little realistic and be honest with the people of Saskatchewan, which quite clearly they're not willing to do to this point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Unity Debate

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all welcome the Premier back to our province after his trip to Quebec and Ontario. Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, members of our caucus are watching events unfold as they relate to national unity with an increasing sense of unease. It seems the forces for Quebec separation are once again getting ready to do battle in yet another attempt to break up our country.

Mr. Speaker, I'd simply like to ask the Premier if he can give the House his sense of the state of national unity given events that have unfolded in the last few days and after his meetings in Quebec.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and before I answer it I would like to express my condolences to him and his family with respect to the loss of his brother as we just found out.

Mr. Speaker, my assessment of the situation is that Canadian unity will prevail, is prevailing, as it has in the past. People in Quebec are looking for an agenda of reform which is I think in some ways very similar to the agenda of reform that people outside of Quebec are also looking for.

We can attend to a lot of our problems with respect to national unity by making sure that we make administrative arrangements where the jurisdictions of the provinces and the federal government are truly understood, that we disentangle, we eliminate overlap and duplication. There may be other items for consideration.

And at this point, those with whom I met — business people, significant numbers of business people and other important, influential people in the province of Quebec — are searching with ideas and concepts which would help us to achieve this goal.

I frankly am not as pessimistic as the Leader of the Opposition's question might imply. I think there is a lot of innovative thought going on inside Quebec and outside Quebec to frame that kind of a package, which may not be a very big constitutional package but none the less pertains to the functioning of Canada, to prove what I think is the obvious — namely, Canada works and it's the best place in all of the world in which to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the people that have heard the Premier's dissertation, again I'm sure they appreciate those comments.

I would like to ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, is if he can see a role that the province of Saskatchewan may be able to play to ensure that this country does not go beyond its unified situation.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is correct to say — and I hope I speak on behalf of every member in this Assembly — that this legislature, this government, the people of the province of Saskatchewan, regardless of ideology and differences, believe in a very strong, unified, and strong country, a country which really has produced so many of the fine things of not only this nation but a leader in other areas of the world. There's no doubt about our commitment.

The Leader of the Opposition asks, what role can the province of Saskatchewan play? For the time being I think our role, as I see it, is to advance the various concepts and ideas which may further the cause of unity, many of which, I repeat again, are not strictly related to constitutional issues as we would think about them in a classical and traditional way; many of which are related to what it means to be a Canadian.

Social policy, which I think is a defining feature of Canadians and Canada — social policy, which is a touchstone. It's not the old railway system, the old national policy. I think working on the national debt; I think the question of a fair taxation policy; making sure that we don't level down but level up the opportunities of working men and women. And doing it without necessarily, as I repeat again before I take my place, a large series of constitutional conferences. We can do this with just common sense application of disentanglement and administrative arrangements.

I'm prepared to entertain any concept or idea on behalf of the people in the province of Saskatchewan which would achieve that broad, general objective and be open to those ideas. And I'd be very pleased to hear from the opposition parties and any group in Saskatchewan as to what they think we should be doing in this province.

But I want to repeat, this country is strong, united, and will remain united. I'm convinced of that as a result of my visit to Montreal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to introduce a Bill to amend The Labour Standards Act.

The division bells rang from 2:17 p.m. until 2:26 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 10

Osika	Aldridge	McLane
Draude	Bjornerud	Krawetz
Gantefoer	D'Autremont	Hepner
Goohsen		

Nays — 30

Romanow	Van Mulligen	Mitchell
MacKinnon	Shillington	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Lautermilch
Upshall	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Trew	Bradley	Lorje
Scott	Nilson	Serby
Stanger	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Kasperski	Sonntag
Flavel	Murrell	Thomson

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day I wish to table a correction to the Chief Electoral Officer's report tabled on Tuesday as sessional paper no. 156.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is the member's point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Today in question period there were a series of questions raised about matters which are: (a) before the House; and (b) before a committee of the House of Crown corporations. The member raised a question about SaskPower, admitting it was here because he didn't particularly like the answers he got in Crown Corporations, which is a committee of the House.

It's always been my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that where a matter is before a committee of the House, it should not be raised in the House itself. I refer, Mr. Speaker, to Beauchesne's, page 133, paragraph 360, which says:

A question may not:

- (2) seek information about proceedings in a committee which has not yet made its report to the House.

And I would refer, Mr. Speaker, as well to Erskine May, the English authority. Although the question period is a little different there, I think this rule is the same. And that reads:

Questions are inadmissible which refer to the consideration of matters by a parliamentary committee.

So I'd ask Mr. Speaker to take this under advisement. It's my understanding that where matters are before . . . It includes also Committee of the Whole. Where something is before Committee of the Whole or it's before Crown Corporations Committee, it is not a proper subject to be raised in the House in question period. It's also, I think, bad form. But I think it's against the rules as well.

(1430)

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I have listened carefully to the point of order raised by the Government House Leader. I will want to do two things: I want to take time to reflect on the points that he has raised and also to review the record, and will bring a ruling to the House in due course.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to question no. 96.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 96 is tabled.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Convert question no. 97.

The Speaker: — Question 97 is converted to motions for returns (debatable).

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Kowalsky: — To ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, It's my pleasure to stand here today on behalf of the member from Redberry and to introduce to you and all members of the House, some 32 students from Hafford School who have travelled at least four . . . I would say four, maybe four and a half hours this morning to get to Regina and to visit the legislature.

They are here from a grade 8 and 9 class in Hafford. And with them is their teacher, Gary Philipchuk; their chaperons, Robert Wall, Janet Baraneski; and guest, Deb Succuii. And I will be very pleased to meet with them on behalf of the member from Redberry later this afternoon. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Lorje: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through

you I would like to introduce a former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) who of course is no stranger to all members on all sides of the House.

I am referring of course, to Mr. Larry Birkbeck. I believe he was the MLA from Moosomin. I welcome him here today and I hope that he enjoys the proceedings now as much as he did when he sat in this legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Limitation of Actions Amendment Act, 1996.

This amendment will extend the limitation period for Saskatchewan recipients of silicon breast implants until December 31, 1998. The extension will ensure that recipients are able to take legal action for damages caused by the implants. This amendment directly responds to an injustice suffered by Saskatchewan residents with silicon breast implants.

A number of Saskatchewan women with silicon breast implants chose to pursue their claims against the manufacturer of the implants by participating in what was being touted as a global settlement of a class action lawsuit in the state of Alabama. Under class actions legislation, claimants who participate in a class action are not allowed to concurrently pursue individual lawsuits.

After agreeing to the global settlement, the manufacturer, Dow Corning, filed for chapter 11 protection under United States bankruptcy laws. This had the effect of significantly reducing the amount of money in the settlement fund. Because of this development, the Alabama court unilaterally excluded all United States claimants from participating in the fund. The rights of Saskatchewan claimants were severely prejudiced by this court decision.

When it became clear they would not receive compensation through the Alabama settlement, a number of Saskatchewan residents jointed a class action suit initiated in British Columbia against silicone breast implant manufacturers.

In British Columbia, however, the rights of Saskatchewan claimants are again in jeopardy of being prejudiced. In that case, the defendants are indicating that they plan to challenge the validity of claims by out-of-province residents. It will be some time before the British Columbia courts rule on the defendants' claim that the British Columbia courts have no jurisdiction to include non-residents in the class action.

If the defendants are unsuccessful in the jurisdictional

argument, they have indicated that they will then raise a limitation period defence against the non-British Columbia residents. Recent case law indicates that the British Columbia court will likely apply to Saskatchewan limitation period in this case.

The amendments contained in the Bill I am introducing today would allow Saskatchewan claimants an opportunity to continue to exercise their legal rights and hopefully correct the injustice done in Alabama. The defendants affected by the extension of the limitation period will not be prejudiced in their ability to defend because they are currently defendants in other legal actions pertaining to this subject matter.

The women who stand to obtain a benefit from this amendment are innocent victims of the American justice system. They were pursuing their legal rights prior to the expiration of their original limitation period. They quite properly decided that the most economical way to pursue their claims was through the class action in Alabama. Making this amendment increases the likelihood that they will be able to recover in the British Columbia class action the damages they have suffered.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Limitation of Actions Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when a Bill is introduced in the House that will truly benefit Saskatchewan people, we must give it our full support. We see no reason to argue issues just for the sake of political games, especially when there is so much to be gained by offering our support.

From our reading of Bill No. 83, An Act to amend The Limitations of Actions Act, we believe this is one of those Bills. With the passage of this amendment, women throughout Saskatchewan will have an opportunity to launch a class action lawsuit against a company that manufactured faulty silicone gel breast implants. Mr. Speaker, this issue has received a lot of attention over the past few years, nationally and internationally. But, Mr. Speaker, we believe we are so concerned because it touches on the lives of the women in our province.

As members of the Assembly may be aware, over 100,000 Canadian women have had silicone breast implant surgeries before 1992, when implants were banned in Canada and the United States. Women were complaining that the implants were leaking silicone gel into the body, causing illness and disease.

Dow Corning Corporation, the company that manufactured the defective implants, agreed to a global settlement of \$4.25 billion. The problem was, Mr. Speaker, that, although over one-half of the implants were sold outside the United States, only 3 per cent will be paid to foreign claimants.

Mr. Speaker, the most distressing fact about this case is Dow Corning's apparent contempt for women, for refusing to warn them about the problem in the early stages.

According to an article from *The Globe and Mail* published last December, Dow Corning knew about the problem as early as 1979. In fact by 1984 the company had received 78 reports from doctors who were calling attention to the unexplained ruptures. Still the company let the sales continue. This shows a complete lack of professional ethics and a complete contempt for people.

As we have continued to say in this House, people must be treated with compassion and as individuals. They are not statistics or financial numbers, and to treat them as such is totally unacceptable.

So how does this issue affect Saskatchewan women? According to an article from the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, between 60 and 70 Saskatchewan women have registered in the global settlement. However there is strong indication that many of these women may never receive money from Dow Corning.

Mr. Speaker, right now only Ontario and Quebec allow class action suits. Because of this a Canadian distributor of breast implants, Bristol-Meyers, agreed to pay women in those provinces \$28 million.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation in this province has put Saskatchewan women at such a disadvantage, particularly given the astronomical costs it would take to launch such a lawsuit against a large U.S. company.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am sure everyone in this House will agree, we want to make sure Saskatchewan women are receiving their fair share of compensation. It's an issue of compassion and it's an issue of justice. Women whose lives have been radically altered by faulty implants deserve our support and our protection.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes amendments to The Limitation of Actions Act. In legalese, this means that a section will be added which guarantees a person will be governed by a limitation period respecting an action that was brought in on or before December 31, 1998. This means the Bill will extend the time period an individual affected by an injection or insertion has to file a claim against an errant company. In other words, Saskatchewan women have a better chance of receiving compensation for their pain and suffering.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have made my point clear. As I said earlier, our job as opposition is to ensure the people of this province are being treated fairly by this government and that legislation is progressive and effective. This Bill seems to fit within the guidelines; therefore we see no reason to hold this Bill up, and I move that Bill 83 be passed to Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 93 — An Act respecting the Public Disclosure of Information related to Individuals who Pose a Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Other Persons

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to

move second reading of The Public Disclosure Act.

This Act responds to a matter of serious public concern — what kind of information should the police release to the public when they become aware that a dangerous offender is residing in their community. This government is responding to requests from the police to provide them with assistance and support in making these difficult decisions. The Bill before us today establishes an independent, professional committee to whom the police can go for advice regarding disclosure.

The process established in the Bill ensures that the rights of all parties involved are considered in making a decision. The Act ensures due process for those individuals impacted by public notification. It permits and encourages a full and fair consideration of the concerns of the community and the rights of the offender in making a recommendation regarding notification. The Act also extinguishes legal actions against the police, members of the committee, and other persons involved in the process where actions have been taken in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, once again Saskatchewan is demonstrating leadership in dealing with an important public issue. We are the first Canadian jurisdiction to implement such legislation. I am confident that it will provide the police with a useful tool to assist them in protecting the public.

Taking the legislative approach to this issue enables us to eliminate causes of action where decisions are taken in good faith. This legislation clearly indicates this government's support for the concept that carefully considered decisions in this area should not be challenged.

(1445)

As I have said before, providing a workable, effective process to allow public notification where it is deemed necessary is just one way to improve how we deal with dangerous offenders in our society.

I will continue to work with the federal government, with other partners in the justice system, and with concerned and committed community members across our province, in determining how to best ensure public safety and appropriate, effective treatment for dangerous offenders.

For example, section 810.1 of the Criminal Code allows judges to order individuals to abide by conditions which could include reporting to the police, not attending at certain places where children might be found, or other reasonable conditions, if it is believed they will commit a sexual offence against a child under the age of 14.

I am encouraging the federal Minister of Justice to proceed with amendments to expand this section to apply to anyone who it is feared will commit a violent or sexual offence. I'm also encouraging the federal Minister of Justice to proceed with recommendations he has received to implement a new sentencing option for offenders who do not meet the dangerous offender criteria but who are believed to be a high risk to re-offend.

If these offenders are held in jail for their whole sentence they are released into the public with no conditions attached. The Criminal Code should allow for a period of probation to be imposed on such people to follow their release from prison to enable supervision of them while they are attempting to become re-established in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting the Public Disclosure of Information related to Individuals who Pose a Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Other Persons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak on Bill 93 today. Bill 93, a Bill that will protect the public from dangerous offenders through public disclosure, in my view is long overdue.

I don't mean that as a criticism of this government specifically. Perhaps what I'm doing is criticizing our society generally. Because, Mr. Speaker, somewhere along the line I think we got off track when it comes to dealing with dangerous criminals — any criminals, for that matter. Somewhere along the line, the rights of those convicted of crimes began to outweigh the innocent victims of those crimes.

Anyone can tell you the frustration that exists in the public when they see convicts released from prison after serving very little time, if they served any time at all. There's no greater frustration than for the victims of these crimes. There is a sense, and quite rightly so in my view, that justice is just not being done in too many of these cases.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have to have checks in our judicial system. The police have to be under close scrutiny to ensure rights are not violated. The Justice department has to continue to ensure that fair trials are given to those charged with crimes. That is being done, and will continue to be done. We should expect no less in a free and democratic country. There has to be due process and that process should be followed.

But, Mr. Speaker, in following that process and ensuring that those charged with crimes are not treated unfairly, we cannot overlook the fundamental rights of those in our province and in our country who follow the law, those who have respect for their fellow man, those who live solid and decent lives. Those are the people that cannot be allowed to slip through the cracks of our justice system. Those are the people we should be more concerned about.

Our system should do what it is intended to do; namely, to keep our streets safe, our homes safe, and our lives safe. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure that's being done as often as should be the case.

I know the members in this House are probably getting tired of me recounting my days as a police officer. But I want to relate to everyone here today the frustration members of any police force feel when they see convicted criminals receive light sentences, or otherwise who are treated with kid gloves by the Justice department, by our justice system. At times, for police

officers trying hard to keep us all safe, it seems that our system works against them instead of working with them.

I don't think there's any greater frustration for a police officer than to see a criminal let off on a technicality. And it's also frustrating when police feel handcuffed by the very system they are in place to enforce. Too often in our society, the police come under fire for the work that they do. It seems there are some who take any opportunity to point the finger of blame at our brave policemen and women.

There is a segment in our society — some may call them bleeding hearts — that view police as the enemy, out to get the public. Any opportunity to call for a public inquiry is seized upon when it comes to the actions of the police. Any opportunity to paint the police in the same light as the criminal is taken. This is truly regrettable.

Mr. Speaker, our police officers aren't in place to be commended every time they turn around. They aren't in place to get high praise each and every day. But they are in place to do a job, and anything we can do as legislators, can do to help them with that job, should be done and it should be done quickly.

Mr. Speaker, probably the finest men and women I have ever worked with — present company excluded, of course — have been in the police force; 99.9 per cent of these people are the most upstanding, decent, dedicated people you'll ever meet. They will go above and beyond the call of duty to protect our citizens from those who have little decency and no conscience.

All they ask from their lawmakers is that they not be the ones who are handcuffed. They ask that they are allowed to carry on their main objective of protection, as unfettered as possible by regulations. Yes, there have to be safeguards in place, but the key word here is safe. We cannot do anything that hinders our police in keeping our people safe.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are people out there who are very suspicious of their police. There are people out there who do not trust their police. Perhaps they have had something happen to them in the past; perhaps they feel they have been mistreated in the past or their family members have been mistreated by the police. That is truly regrettable.

And yes, there are some in our society who probably have been mistreated by individual police officers. Like in any profession, whether it be accounting, whether it be law, or even politics, there are some bad apples who taint the vast majority who are honest and totally above reproach. Unfortunately these are the people who get most of the attention.

The police officer who simply goes to work everyday and does his or her job, and does it well, doesn't receive much attention for it. But like in politics, those who break the rules receive the glare of publicity and the public light shines on them all, harms them all in the eyes of the public — that, I feel, is unfair. But I suppose there is a reality we have to live with.

But, Mr. Speaker, we as legislators can do our best to make sure

our police are given the authority, the power they need, to do their jobs in the most effective way possible.

That's why I was so adamant about a public disclosure law. The police have to be given the tools they need to tell the public that a potentially dangerous person is in their midst. The people have been asking for it and they deserve that type of protection at the very least.

Again there are some who will probably be adamantly opposed to this type of provision. There are some that will say, when a convict has served his or her time that should be the end of it. Once they are released from prison, they should be allowed to continue on with their life as any free citizen should.

Mr. Speaker, I don't totally agree. I don't agree, Mr. Speaker, because for any victim of a violent crime there is a life sentence attached. A family who has lost a parent or a child to violent crime will never fully recover. A woman who has been raped never fully recovers from this ultimate form of violation. For these people, the trauma carries on long after the attacker is dealt with in the courts.

So is it unreasonable to think the perpetrators of these forms of heinous crimes should be let off any easier? Should they, after serving a prison sentence, be allowed to carry on with their lives free in the knowledge that their neighbours or co-workers know nothing about their violations against society?

Do parents not have the right to know that there is a potentially dangerous person lurking in their neighbourhood? Do they not have the right to keep their kids safe? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think — no, I know — that they do have that right. And it is up to us in this House to ensure that they do have the right.

There are those whose hearts bleed for the criminal but, Mr. Speaker, my heart bleeds for the victims. I make no apologies for that nor should anyone, because for too long now victims of violent crimes have been without rights. They have been virtually ignored by our system. The time for this injustice has got to come to an end. And in some small way, I believe with this Bill, we are finally, at long last moving in that direction.

Like I've said, throughout my life in and out of the police force, there comes a time when a criminal's rights has simply got to give way to the rights of the victim — to the rights of society. How can we call ourselves a caring society if this does not happen? Quite simply, we can't. If this is not done, how can we as legislators ever look at the victims of crime or their survivors in the eye again. Again, we couldn't.

We in this House are honoured by the fact our voters sent us here, and we should know that in placing that trust in us, they are asking us to do what is right in this place. I believe, with the movement towards public disclosure of dangerous offenders, we are doing what is right. At long last, the victims, the law-abiding members of our communities, come out at the top of the heap.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't had a great deal of time to study Bill 93. In ideal circumstances, I would like to personally gather

opinions from law enforcement officials and others whose opinions I value a great deal. But what I've seen so far, I believe the Bill strikes a fair balance between the rights of criminals and the rights of the rest of us.

There are some concerns, of course, whenever a committee of any type is struck, that the entire system along the way will get bogged down in red tape. But I will heed the opinion of Chief Maguire when he says he is satisfied with the Bill.

The most important aspect of this legislation is that the police can feel free to release pertinent information on released convicts they see as potential threats to our safety, and they can do so without fear of legal action being taken against them. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the handcuffs have come off; at least, they've been loosened somewhat. And I applaud this of course and so too, I believe, do the people of Saskatchewan, the vast majority of them at any rate.

But I also urge the Minister of Justice to carefully monitor the system he is proposing in this Bill because, Mr. Speaker, once this Bill is passed, we can't think our work is done there. If the process that is to be put in place turns out to be ineffective or at least not completely effective, we will have to revisit this issue at a future date. Because, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to legislation of this type, we have to make sure we are as near to perfect as possible. When we are dealing with legislation of this type there is very little room for error. And if there is room for error it must be on the side of the victims or potential victims.

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe at this point in time the Bill, as proposed by our very able Minister of Justice, is at least worth a try. And I believe it should be put into place as soon as possible. As I said when I raised this issue in the House earlier in the session, we have to move on this as quickly as possible.

For that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the minister and the government the benefit of the doubt on this Bill. Like I said, I would have liked to have had more time to study the details of the Bill to a greater extent and to gather opinions on it, but I also think time is of the essence when it comes to this type of legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition caucus are not going to hold up passage of Bill 93 any longer than is absolutely necessary. We will ask for some clarifications in Committee of the Whole, but at this point we see no reason to hold up this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I just want to say — I want to say all of us in this House should be proud to pass this Bill. It is a Bill that people have been asking for and it is a Bill that they deserve. With this legislation, Mr. Speaker, I believe we are in fact doing our job as legislators. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

(1500)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned debate on this Bill we wanted to take time to gather some more opinions about the Bill and to kind of understand what this Bill will mean to the people of Saskatchewan. We've already raised some concerns on behalf of our constituents and they're concerns that still stand. However, according to most of our legal opinions, some of these concerns may prove to be unfounded. When we discuss the Bill further in the House, we will make sure of this, and we will ask the government to clarify some of the specific clauses in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, our greatest apprehension still surrounds the issue of municipal tax bases — tax bases that help sustain communities throughout this province. You see, Mr. Speaker, we actually care about the municipalities in Saskatchewan. While it appears that the members opposite continue to chip away at the very structure of our communities, we will fight for their survival. Every time they turn a deaf ear to a community that needs to be heard, Mr. Speaker, we will listen. Because unlike the government, we believe that municipalities have valid concerns that must be addressed.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they have been disappointed time and time again as this government chooses not to listen. When they see the government introduce a Bill like this one, what are they supposed to expect?

They have watched this government systematically dismantle health care then turn their backs on anyone who dares to protest. They are watching as this NDP government forces schools to shut down, fire teaching staff, and make severe cuts to programs. And of course, Mr. Speaker, our real concern is for the very children that need to be educated in rural Saskatchewan.

They are being forced to watch as the highways throughout this province crumble under an uncaring, unfeeling government to the point of where now we have an open . . . or a 1-800 number, Mr. Speaker, that invites calls from motorists and tourists pointing out where the potholes are in the province.

An Hon. Member: — Everywhere.

Mr. McLane: — And that is of course, everywhere.

Do the members opposite really believe that people will continue to trust anything that they say if they continue to chip away at our very system of social well-being?

Mr. Speaker, this government is like a child pulling legs off a spider. They continue to tear off one limb at a time until our province is completely crippled. And when we can't move forward any more, we will die. Stagnant societies can't exist indefinitely, but a stagnant society is exactly what this government is creating.

Mr. Speaker, don't municipalities have a right to be worried? Don't the citizens in towns, villages, and RMs (rural municipality), hamlets throughout Saskatchewan have a very good reason to fear for their communities?

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think this government forgets that there are actually people living in those communities — people trying to make a decent living for themselves and for their children. Municipalities aren't just a circle on a map to be pinpointed then axed by this government. They are communities that were formed by cooperation and compassion — traits that have long been forgotten by this government, it would appear.

Mr. Speaker, as you know and as all the members in this Assembly know, municipalities are all ready cash-strapped. And as this government cuts \$20 million, the situation is destined to get worse. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we want to be absolutely 100 per cent sure that this Bill won't further erode municipal tax bases. We want the Justice minister or the Minister of Municipal Government to stand up in this House and assure municipalities that if this Bill is passed, it will have no damaging effect on their tax base.

As you may remember, Mr. Speaker, we raised some concerns about the provisions in this Bill that will allow Indian bands to purchase non-reserve land in their own name. Currently they must go through a corporation, and I want to reiterate that we have no problem with Indian bands owning land in their name as long as they continue to contribute to the municipality.

We have listened to municipalities, and we must pass on their concerns to this Assembly as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I should tell the members opposite our legal opinions have helped to alleviate some of these fears. They say that this land would be subject to municipal property taxes, failing some special arrangement with the municipality.

However they have also pointed out that some first nation bands are buying property in cities and towns and then seeking to convert them to reserve status. Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the conversion to reserve status is long and complicated, and I know there are ways that municipalities will accept the conversion. For example, one of the area bands has purchased land in or near Sutherland and they have signed a deal with the city of Saskatoon for services. I understand that they have agreed to pay the city for services in lieu of taxes.

And the same thing has happened of course in Fort Qu'Appelle; a mutual agreement between responsible people was reached through a positive process of discussion and consultation, which is very important. So you see, Mr. Speaker, I guess it can be done.

This must be a different kind of consultation than the government's where they talk and people are forced to listen. This kind of consultation actually produces results that are good for both parties involved.

Mr. Speaker, we would hope that the passage of this Bill would not affect the whole reserve conversion process. That would be completely counterproductive.

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, reserve status means special taxation treatment as outlined in section 87 of the Indian Act. This section states that:

(1) notwithstanding any other Act of parliament or any Act of the legislature of a province but subject to section 83, the following property is exempt from taxation, (namely):

- (a) the interests of an Indian or a band in reserve lands or surrendered lands; and
- (b) the personal property of an Indian or a band situated on a reserve.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would assume that the changes proposed in this Bill will not affect this Act in any way whatsoever. This is something we will be asking the government to clarify.

Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite share some concerns about the issue of taxation. The Finance minister herself has made the NDP position very clear. In an article from the *Star-Phoenix* on May 3, the Finance minister is quoted as saying:

"If they take one part of the tax system to court — the on-reserve part — then we reserve the right, quite rightly, to take the whole tax regime to court including the off-reserve exemption. That's the position we've always taken."

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the government will want to be completely honest and open when we discuss this Bill further.

Mr. Speaker, before we let this Bill pass to the committee stage, I must mention my surprise over some of the issues that this Bill doesn't touch on. There are of course other problems with The Land Titles Act that this government didn't seem to want to amend or attempt to amend.

For example, the issue of computerization. There hasn't been any meaningful discussion about our system moving into the computer world. It's something that has taken place in Alberta and appears to be a positive step. And I guess I know that . . . or we all know that the old quill pen is a comforting image for legal offices, Mr. Speaker, but it's not an efficient system in our highly technology-based society. If this government is looking to improve efficiency and to save taxpayers money in the long run, is this not an issue worth considering?

Besides the need for faster, more efficient service, the biggest complaint about Land Titles is the high cost of service. Fees in

other provinces are far more reasonable than the fees we charge here. I think the government needs to re-evaluate the role of Land Titles in this province. Is it a service for the people living in this province or is it a cash cow for the government coffers? Aren't people already giving enough to this government through the high utility rates and of course the oppressive sales tax that we have in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, we've already spoken on this Bill a number of times and I think we have made our position clear. As I mentioned today, we'll have a number of questions for the government as the Bill moves on and before it passes into law. I guess we look forward to hearing their answers to some of our questions and collecting the assurances on behalf of the municipalities and the people throughout the province.

The Speaker: — I must acknowledge that the Minister of Justice would be closing debate, and if any member wishes to speak to this Bill before I recognize him, would he please do so now.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I was interested to listen to the remarks of the member for Arm River. And he said that the position of the Liberal Party should be clear following those that paid attention to his comments.

I'm simply amazed, Mr. Speaker. On the one hand, he says that we've received legal opinions on this review of the Bill; we have no concerns on the basis of these legal opinions. However the member goes on to fulminate at length about perceived concerns that he says rural municipalities have with the government — concerns that people in rural Saskatchewan have about the government. He went on at great lengths and related this somehow to the Bill.

So if it's clear to him, it's not clear to anyone else just what the position of the Liberal Party is on this Bill. On the one hand, we expect that he would support the Bill and vote for the Bill because he says he has no concerns about the Bill. On the other hand, he went on at great length to talk about concerns that he has. So I don't know quite what the connection was — on the one hand saying that he's for it and on the other hand saying that we have a great number of concerns. Maybe the remarks that he was giving had nothing to do with the Bill and had more to do with other concerns that the member has.

But in any event, Mr. Speaker, I found his remarks . . . and especially I was moved to make my comments after listening to him say that it should be clear to all concerned just what the position of the Liberal Party was. It isn't very clear. I'm not quite sure what the Liberal Party is going to do. Are they going to vote for it, or are they going to vote against it? It's not very clear from the remarks of the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It is my duty to warn the Assembly that the Hon. Minister of Justice is about to exercise his right to close debate, and afterwards all members will be precluded from speaking to this question.

Therefore if any member wishes to speak, let that member do so now.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, just before the debate is closed on this matter, I would like to clarify a point that was made by the hon. member from Arm River. I would like to congratulate my predecessor, the very able minister of Justice who is now the very able Minister of Post-Secondary Education, because he had the foresight in 1994 to shepherd through a very important project which will deal with the concerns that appear not have to be known by the member from Arm River.

In 1994 the project was started — which will be a long-term project, and we're in the midst of it now — called the LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Design) project. It's a land titles automated network delivery project. And this project will, we hope, provide a Saskatchewan automated solution which will put us in the forefront of land title systems in the country. And with that note I would like to close the debate.

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

Bill No. 88

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 88 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendments outlined within Bill 88 to change The Queen's Bench Act could have a major impact on the justice system in rural Saskatchewan. The new legislation would change the laws governing where Court of Queen's Bench judges have to live.

The current legislation specifically states that Queen's Bench judges were required to live in each of 10 Saskatchewan communities. The amendment in Bill 88 replaces that section with a more vague requirement that states that at least one Queen's Bench judge will be required to reside in the neighbourhood of each place designated in the regulations.

By removing the specific locations in which Queen's Bench judges are required to live, the government is making it easier to close down small judicial centres in rural Saskatchewan. The regulations prescribed in the current Act already give the government the authority to disestablish judicial centres.

(1515)

This government is already flexing that authority with the announcements of the closures of the Queen's Bench court-houses in Melville and Kerrobert. Those recent announcements only confirm my fears that this government is on a course to strip rural Saskatchewan of services and jobs that are at the heart of many communities. The decisions to close the court-houses in Kerrobert and Melville were done without much forethought or consultation. If this government believes in true democracy, why are these closures being done without gathering input from the communities affected?

The residents of Melville and Kerrobert have some suggestions and proposals on how the judicial service in their areas can be

improved, and this without losing their court-houses. But this government simply refuses to listen.

Even though the Justice minister went through the motions of appearing at a rally against the court-house closure in Kerrobert, he refused to look beyond the statistics of court appearances in that area. Four hundred people braved the cold weather at that rally to plead their case before the Justice minister. He heard testimony after testimony about the hardships this closure will inflict upon the citizens of Kerrobert, but he refuses to listen.

The Kerrobert closure is also being condemned by the chamber of commerce there, and residents have compiled a petition of 2,400 names. Yet the government still refuses to listen. The Kerrobert Chamber of Commerce has come to the conclusion that the decision to shut down the court-house is nothing more than part of this government's political agenda.

Unfortunately that agenda does not include any grand strategy for rural Saskatchewan. This is not a secret to the people in rural Saskatchewan. It has become clear during the past few years. They don't have to get any further than their local road to notice the deplorable conditions that are being ignored by this government. They are attending health board meetings which are pitting communities against each other. They are being forced to compete for the paltry funding this government is offering.

Meanwhile the government is trying to renege on any responsibility it has for maintaining health services. The people in rural Saskatchewan are wondering where they will get the money to pay for the increase in their local tax bills because of offloading onto municipalities from this provincial government.

The people in rural Saskatchewan are attending meetings to decide how far they can cut back on education services because of funding cuts again passed down by this government. Farmers in rural Saskatchewan know the government does not have their best interest at heart when they have to travel farther and farther distances to purchase their crop insurance.

Now the people in Melville and Kerrobert know they are only part of the government's grand scheme to strip services. This government is effectively discouraging positive economic development in rural Saskatchewan. New employees are reluctant to move into communities that lack essential services like health care and schools. This government continues to force unnecessary hardships on the people of Saskatchewan and, more specifically, on rural Saskatchewan.

The people in these communities are continually watching government workers being pulled from their economies. They have seen it in Highways, health services, Social Services, Education, Crop Insurance, and now in Justice. They want to know when the bleeding will end. Mr. Speaker, we would also like to know this same thing.

After examining Bill 88, I believe the government does not plan to reverse its destructive agenda — not at all. The amendment proposed for section 52 will permit this government more

freedom to close down rural court-houses in a haphazard manner.

It's time for the government to begin to accept responsibility for its decisions and job cuts. It's time that it started listening to the concerns of people in this province. This government continues to make reckless decisions without gathering input from the communities that are being directly affected. The result is that these same people are losing faith in the democratic process.

In an article published in the *Melville Advance* yesterday, Melville mayor, Mike Fisher, is quoted as saying:

The government has made up its mind and you aren't going to get anywhere arguing. People will reach a point that they're sick of government.

Mayor Fisher goes on to say:

What I'm concerned about is the honesty of giving information and proper detail about the closure . . . I don't think the government is even going to give us the courtesy of a response.

The mayor has sent a letter to the Justice minister asking why he did not have the courtesy to meet with officials in Melville to hear their proposals. That letter was sent seven weeks ago, and the mayor is still waiting for a response. A letter outlining the concerns of the member from Melville also has not received a response from the minister. What do these people have to do to get the government to listen to their valid concerns and suggestions?

Lawyers who represent clients in smaller centres are also expressing concerns about the court-house closures and any further closures that may be executed under The Queen's Bench Act. They are telling us that they will have to charge clients for more time because they will be forced to travel farther distances to make court appearances on behalf of their clients. This extra cost could limit the basic right to accessibility of justice services in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, that is one of our gravest concerns. We're extremely worried that the amendments outlined in Bill 88 have the potential to limit the access Saskatchewan people have to the justice system.

Because the potential impacts of Bill 88 are so far-reaching, I would like to have some more time to consult with stakeholders affected by proposed changes, and I would move that the debate be adjourned.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Thunder Creek has moved that second reading debate on Bill No. 88 be adjourned. However, as he has previously moved adjournment of debate, his motion is out of order, and debate on second reading of Bill No. 88 will continue.

Mr. Krawetz: — In light of the points raised by the member from Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker, we would like to ask for an extension and be able to obtain further information. And I would ask that debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today, Susan Amrud from the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to your official, Mr. Minister.

I wonder, Minister . . . and I am sure you can appreciate that the gentleman, Leader of the Opposition, that's normally responsible for Justice issues is away for reasons that I know you understand. So please allow this country boy a little bit of latitude in terms of getting into legal issues.

Would you mind, Minister, to please overview a bit of the intention and the thrust of this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to give you a brief overview. Basically this involves the administration of funds within the government. And the practical point is that it will allow for funds to be paid out to people in a much more efficient and quick fashion. The present system as it relates to funds over the amount of \$10,000 means that it has to go through an order in council process, through the cabinet. And this will allow for many of the payments that are made in departments to go in a much faster manner.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I also notice that there are areas under particularly a new section 17 that have to do with allowing cabinet ministers or the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to enter into agreements with other governments and things of that nature. Can you explain the background for particularly that section?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, another purpose of the Bill is section 17, which allows for ministers to enter into agreements. But this is subject to them giving notice to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs whose job is to make sure that the other ministers don't sign agreements that haven't received the appropriate approvals within the government.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, would you be able to give us some general examples of the type of agreements that this might apply to?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Generally they involve trade. And a good example here was an agreement that the Department of Agriculture wished to enter into with the country of Ukraine. And this allowed for the person, the Minister of Agriculture, to go to the Ukraine and sign the document and bind the

government.

Mr. Gantefoer: — And as I understand it then, Minister, using your example, the Minister of Agriculture would then be able to go and sign this agreement on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. How does this relate then to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs? Is the Minister of Agriculture required to give prior notice to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and then the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs gives his blessing, his imprimatur or whatever. How is that process?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Practically what happens is that the Minister of Agriculture, in the example, would give notice to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. And basically that's for good governance so that there is one minister who has control and an idea of all of the different agreements. But it's just notice; it's not prior approval.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Is it a requirement then for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to sign off or approve this agreement before the Minister of Agriculture — just staying on that example — would be able to enter into it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs would not have to sign off.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Then he probably wouldn't have to travel as well to any of these far and remote and exotic locations on behalf the . . . Thank you, Minister.

Is there a connection between the \$50,000 limit in terms of agreements or expenditures tied to this same type of thing, or are these agreements then separate and apart from that area?

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think it's a completely separate issue, and it just happened that since we were opening up the Act to do one amendment, we thought we might as well look at that \$10,000 limit.

Mr. Gantefoer: — In the \$50,000, are there any limitations, or does this allow sort of a ministerial discretion to be moved from \$10,000 to 50,000 without limitation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No, these are only amounts that are already approved in the budget that are being expended. And so what happens is the budget is passed, and the minister has a certain amount of money to spend in an area that is set out in the budget. When the request or when the appropriate documentation is ready or whatever is required, then the minister can sign on his own authority up to \$50,000 for the payment to be made. Now the limit is \$10,000. This would increase it to \$50,000, and therefore it increases the efficiency with which third parties would receive money from the government.

Mr. Gantefoer: — So it would have absolutely nothing to do with monies that would be spent over and above what was allocated in the budget process and would have to be requested

by special warrants or things of that nature?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think if there was a special warrant such as we're operating on now, those kinds of amounts would be included in this. But that's already . . . that's been to the legislature for approval. But no, it doesn't include giving the minister discretion to spend money that's above and beyond what is appropriately approved through the financial mechanisms that have been set up.

Mr. Gantefoer: — This would apply equally to all the members of Executive Council, or would the Premier have a special consideration by the nature of his office?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It applies to all ministers including the Premier.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Minister. I think that covers the general area of questions that we had. We see this as a Bill that is a very common sense Bill and we would have no further questions to stand in the way of it moving forward.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I move that this Bill be reported without amendment.

The Chair: — We have to go through clause by clause.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 89 — An Act to amend The Dependants' Relief Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm pleased to introduce an official, Andrea Seale, who is going to be working with me today.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to your assistant. Again, Mr. Minister, I'm just going to ask you to review this just for a minute to just update us on this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'd be pleased to give you a brief summary of the amendments that we're proposing for this legislation.

The following amendments are made and they relate to applications respecting the dependant adult offspring of deceased parents. Our first amendment will provide so that when an application is made, a court will be allowed to establish a trust for the dependant. This trust will be used to help the dependant become more independent or it will be used to meet his or her special needs or perhaps to provide occasional gifts to the dependant.

In determining the amount of the trust, the court will take into consideration that any social assistance maintenance will continue to be provided. The capital and income from trusts established pursuant to The Dependants' Relief Act will not be

considered assets or income of the recipients for purposes of determining eligibility for social assistance.

If there isn't another suitable trustee, the Public Trustee may be appointed as the trustee. And there will also be a provision which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations limiting the amount or the size of the trust. That's the gist of the amendments.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just have a number of questions here for clarification, starting with clause 3 of the Bill, which amends section 9, particularly 9(4) of the Act. The Dependants' Relief Act already gives tremendous discretion and power to the court when it makes a maintenance order in favour of a dependant. I see from reading section 9(1) of the Act that the court, when it makes the maintenance orders, appears to be able to impose what it calls, "such conditions and restrictions as the court deems fit."

Mr. Minister, do you interpret those words in the statute as broad enough to permit the court to impose either conditions or restrictions on the allowance that it orders so to ensure that it's paid into a trust fund for the purpose of benefiting the dependant?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think it would be arguable that the courts could have done this before, but we wanted to make sure that it was clear that they could set up the trust and also that we put in the qualifier that it was for the benefit and use of the dependant. So practically, it was to make it very clear that this was an option for the court.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, was there a particular court case which is found . . . that those words that I have cited from section 9(1), which says:

9(1) If upon an application the court is of opinion that the testator has by will so disposed of real or personal property that reasonable provision has not been made for the maintenance of the dependant to whom the application relates, then, subject to the following provisions and to such conditions and restrictions as the court deems fit, the court may, in its discretion, make an order charging the whole or any portion of the estate, in such proportion and in such manner as it deems proper, with payment of an allowance sufficient to provide such maintenance as the court thinks reasonable . . .

If this was broad enough to give authority to a court to require that an allowance be paid into a trust fund for the benefit . . . and the benefit of the dependant?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There wasn't a particular court case that I know of, and I know from within my own law practice that you would have questions raised about this from many different angles and not necessarily just from court cases. Often when people were trying to plan for their dependent children as they got older, they had questions about how The Dependants' Relief Act provisions would interplay with some of their own estate planning.

And I think this is part of an overall discussion where we're trying to meet some of the needs that have been raised by groups like the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, parents of other dependants. So it's not one specific court case but it's a start at dealing with some of the difficult issues in this area.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the other words from The Dependants' Relief Act that is presented would lead an earnest reader such as myself to conclude that the courts already have the power to establish trust funds for the benefit of dependants. Those words are found in section 9(4) of the Act as it is presently written.

This section already says that when an allowance is ordered it, "may be by way of an amount payable annually or otherwise" and here I move on a bit in a section and I'm being faithful to the meaning of the section saying, to the dependant or for the use and benefit of the dependant as a court deems fit.

Mr. Minister, as a lawyer, would agree that the term "use and benefit" refers to the creation of a trust? Do you agree?

The Chair: — Before the minister answers, I would like to advise him it's been brought to the Chair's attention that when he introduced the official, your light was maybe not on and she's not on record, so would you do that before you answer this question again.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay. I'm very pleased to have the assistance of Andrea Seale today. And she is providing assistance. Now I would like to answer the member's question.

When we entered into consultation in this area, we met with a number of groups, and I'll give you the names because I think it's quite helpful for you to understand. First organization was Parents and Caregivers Association for the Mentally Challenged, Canadian Mental Health Association, Regina and district Association for Community Living, Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, the Autism Resource Centre, and the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan.

And I mention those groups because their concern was exactly as you raise, that although it seems as if, on the words, we could do what we are already doing, they raised the concern that it wasn't clear enough. And so therefore we heard their concern and said, well we'll make it clear. Because this is the intention, that it would be possible to set up trust funds that would be specifically available for their dependent children. And that's why we've brought his amendment.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, when you spoke about this Bill during debate on second reading on May 13, you stated:

However, to ensure that their dependent adult sons or daughters benefit from their inheritances, many parents now set up discretionary trusts in their wills. Such trusts give trustees discretion in making payments to dependent adult beneficiaries. By the use of these discretionary trusts, parents ensure that inheritances are used to enhance the quality of life of dependent adult sons or daughters.

... The Dependants' Relief Amendment Act, 1996 will help to level the playing-field for dependent adults whose parents have not provided for them in their wills. It will allow a court to order the establishment of a trust for a dependent adult.

Mr. Minister, is your Bill envisioning the creation of completely discretionary trusts or will there be any obligation on the part of the trustees to make payments out of the trust funds?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This is a straight trust. And I think I would like to explain about the wording "level playing-field." What happens is when people obtain legal advice and do estate planning which they actually would, you know, pay a fair sum of money for, they will get a will that includes a trust that would deal with some of these issues.

What we're concerned about is often people will make very simple wills and not include specific provisions for their dependent children. And what this change will do will allow a trustee or some person to make an application under the Act to provide for the trust in the same way as they might have done if they had full legal advice preparing their will.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, clause 4 of your Bill creates a new section of The Dependants' Relief Act in section 9.1. This new section has several subsections and the one that interests me is subsection 2. You have listed four purposes for the allowance that is to be paid out of the trust fund. They are, roughly, helping the dependant achieve independence; meeting the special needs of the dependant; providing occasional gifts to the dependant; and combination of the above.

Mr. Minister, I gather you do not envision any allowance being paid out of this trust fund for the basic needs of the dependant such as food, shelter, clothing, lodging, transportation, and recreation. Do I understand that correctly?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — These provisions that were put into the Act were suggested by the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan, and the basic idea here would be that the everyday needs of the individuals would be provided by social assistance. And so this deals with those situations where people are getting their basic needs met through the social assistance system, and then the parents want to provide something a little bit extra for them through a trust fund. And that's the ... sort of the specific situation we're dealing with here.

The Chair: — Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — With leave, to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in the Speaker's gallery we have 26 grade 8 students

from Buena Vista School in the heart of the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana, the constituency I represent.

Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Teague, as well as chaperons, Mr. and Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Grandey. I would ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming these students to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 89 (continued)

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I understand then that this section is dealing with dependants that are on social services, and I'm wondering if it wouldn't be a good idea to expand the list of permitted expenditures for which the allowances could be used from the rather small list to a larger, more comprehensive list.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the wording here is quite broad. And practically you could include some of the things that you were concerned about. But if you have any suggestions about things that are beyond what's been contemplated in this wording, perhaps you would like to make them. But practically we see this wording as quite broad.

I think the other thing that we need to remember is that the basic purpose of the overall Act, The Dependants' Relief Act, is to make sure that if an estate is of a sufficient size, that it would basically make sure it provides for everybody who is a dependant of the person who has died. And that would include, if there's sufficient money, all of the living expenses for that dependant.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The subsections (3), (4), and (7) of new section 9.1 of the Act sets out some new rules governing the extent to which a dependent adult child will be able to receive an allowance from this new type of trust fund and still be eligible to receive benefits from the government out of The Saskatchewan Assistance Act. In subsection (4), the Bill states that:

The capital of and income from a trust fund is not to be considered as an asset or income of the dependant for the purpose of determining the dependant's eligibility for assistance pursuant to *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* or any other similar assistance program funded by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Could you explain what you mean by any other similar assistance program?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What we are doing here, to answer your question, is that there are possible situations where new legislation would provide assistance to some of these people. We didn't want to have to come back and amend the Act if a new program was there. The only program in existence right

now is the Saskatchewan social assistance program, but we wanted to cover the possibility that in the next few years there might be some other program.

Ms. Draude: — That would be good news.

Mr. Minister, the sub-clause 7 in the new section 9.1 allows the provincial government to make regulations limiting the amount of the trust fund. I guess I'm questioning why you would want to limit it.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to that is that if it was a very large estate, we may want to make sure that the judge had the power to use the money out of the estate to pay all of the person's expenses so that they wouldn't be on social assistance. So for example, if there was an estate that had a million dollars in it and a good portion of that money was set aside for the dependant in a trust fund, we don't think that it would be totally appropriate that that person would then still receive social assistance. That's why it's worded that way.

Ms. Draude: — Do you have an amount in mind of what you think this trust fund will be limited to?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The amount we have in mind at this time is \$50,000.

Ms. Draude: — Do you agree, Mr. Minister, that the monetary limits placed on the size of the trust fund created under this new provision will operate as a restriction on the discretion of the court to create these new trust funds?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Perhaps you could explain your question.

Ms. Draude: — I think by limiting the amount, it's giving the courts a lot more leeway. I guess I'm just wondering why the number 50,000 was chosen? Is there any specific reason for that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the number 50,000 was chosen because, in the discussions with the various groups, there was some concern about balancing that responsibility of the estate for the care of a dependent adult versus the responsibility of the province and their funding. And there was some concern that we would set up funds of quite a large amount that would not be able to be taken in to pay the day-to-day expenses and then supplement or actually replace the social assistance payments. So kind of the halfway or median point at this stage was \$50,000. But we knew that that amount may change given inflation and some other things. And so that's why we want the amount set in the regulations.

Ms. Draude: — What about the existing trust funds which are already in use for the benefit of disabled adults? Will they enjoy the same treatment as those that have been set up after the passage of this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If there's a fund that is presently in existence that isn't being treated in the same way as funds might be under this legislation, then I think it would be possible to apply to the court to have it designated as a fund like this.

But practically, if they're set up as discretionary trusts with proper legal advice, then this whole legislation really doesn't affect them at all.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one final question. What directives are going to be issued to the Department of Social Services when it receives requests for benefits from disabled adults who already have trust funds established which were set up before this? Will they be given any directive from your department as to how to deal with this new Act?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Perhaps you can clarify. Are you talking about the discretionary trusts that are already in existence?

Well if you were talking about discretionary trusts, then they're not affected by this legislation at all because whatever amount is in the discretionary trust can only be paid out by the trustee at that trustee's discretion. And so therefore it can't be included in the amounts that social assistance uses when they try to calculate what amounts are available for the dependent adult.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1600)

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 74 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 89 — An Act to amend The Dependants' Relief Act

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Water Corporation Vote 50

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, will you introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be pleased to introduce my officials. Today I have with me Brian Kaukinen, to my right, who is the president of Sask Water; to

my left, Wayne Dybvig, the vice-president of water resource management within the corporation; and to my far right, Dave Schiman, the manager of financial planning with the Saskatchewan Water Corporation.

Item 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. And welcome, Minister, and to your officials. We're glad you can be here today.

And I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about Sask Water. In my previous life I had the opportunity to be secretary-treasurer for C&D (conservation and development) areas for over 20 years, so this is interesting to look at life on the other side.

Could you maybe give me the overview of the department for 1995?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I guess the mandate of the Water Corporation is really quite clear. We assist in managing our water resource in the province. We are attempting to move the corporation to a position of self-sufficiency, and this has been a bit of progress that we have been working on over the past years.

We believe that it is our responsibility to manage this resource in a meaningful and an environmentally and an economically friendly way, and that we can and we should be doing this without a great degree of public subsidization. Certainly we will be investing, over the course of time, in major water management projects that would have to be amortized over a longer period of time.

We attempt to work with the agricultural community to develop value added processing. We're looking at some projects in the irrigation area east of Moose Jaw to attempt to see if we can attract investors to deal with potato . . . in growing of potatoes on irrigated land.

I have been the minister responsible for Sask Water now on two occasions. I was, early in . . . after we were elected in '91, and I left for other responsibilities and came back about a year, year and a half ago I guess now.

And what I have found, even in the course of the time that I had left, is that the corporate attitude within the corporation has been and has developed a very healthy approach to try and make the irrigation projects in this province self-sufficient, but also to work with the irrigators and the people involved in that segment of agriculture to help to develop some value added produce, some value added crops.

I think, if I look at the history of irrigation in Saskatchewan, we have spent an awful lot of public funds to develop irrigation projects that really haven't focused on value added, new cropping, new produce that would create job opportunities for more Saskatchewan people. I think one of the disappointments that I found when I initially came was we were investing a lot of public funds to grow larger crops of wheat. And I just don't

think that that was an appropriate approach, and we're working and moving to changing that in as much as we can.

It's a transitional period. We work closely with conservation and development authorities. As you've indicated, you've been part of that, so you'll probably have a better understanding of that than I will, in my short year and a half here. But we try and work with the people who are interested in water management.

Sometimes we have, as you will know, some problems between neighbours, and we will have problems between communities, and problems with communities upstream from those downstream. But we try and work as best we can in a cooperative approach to responsible water management in the province.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I noticed that there was a sizeable reduction in Sask Water's budget for 1996, and I'm wondering if you can tell me how the change, the reduction in the budget . . . what type of influence it will have on your mandate.

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — To ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are two individuals that I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Chair, and through you to my colleagues in the House: Glen Gatin and Wendy Johnston who have been meeting with my office on training issues this afternoon.

Mr. Gatin was a candidate for the government party in the constituency of Moosomin. And Ms. Johnston is a national consultant on workplace education with the Canadian Federation of Labour. They are working in Saskatchewan on first nation employment and workplace education initiatives with a couple of the first nations. And I would like to have my colleagues in the House welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Water Corporation Vote 50

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the gallery as well. We hope you're enjoying the proceedings this afternoon, although sometimes I wonder how anyone can enjoy these proceedings. They seem to drag on sometimes.

Anyway, with respect to the budget reductions, the main element to the budget reduction is the impact of the Humboldt-Wakaw pipeline that was budgeted for last year which won't show up in this year's budget.

As well, the Water Corporation has experienced a reduction in operating dollars from Treasury Board, as all other government departments have. We've been working very hard to back-fill some of the federal transfer payment reduction, at the same time maintaining services, and at the same time balancing our budgets. Sometimes it becomes a little bit tricky. So I guess all elements and all arms of government have been asked to share in this reduction of expenditures.

I am told by the officials within the Water Corporation that they can manage the change. It, in some cases, will mean that some employees will take on a little bit more responsibility, perhaps work longer hours, to add for areas where there might be some shortfalls. But in terms of the overall mandate of the corporation, the operations of the corporation, we believe that it is sufficiently funded to be able to carry on the duties that I know that you and I would both want to see happen.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I guess it's up to you and I to make the afternoon a little more interesting so people don't think . . . don't find our debate boring. So I guess I'd like to offer a suggestion that I feel that Sask Water is a bit of a hybrid Crown. Its role as a water manager is a line department item in the *Estimates* book, while its commercial ventures resemble a Crown activity. When we look at these dual roles, we have to ask, who is Sask Water accountable to?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the member is right, Mr. Chairman. It is in a way a hybrid Crown. The funding is . . . I guess it's partly a Treasury Board Crown and it's partly a Crown Investments Corporation Crown. The Water Corporation will make presentations to the CIC board. And as I understand it, the funding does come from Treasury Board. The minister in charge of the Treasury Board also sits on the Crown Investments Corporation board, as I do. So funding basically comes from, I guess, the executive arm of government. The process whereby scrutiny on decisions is made is through CIC. I can say to the member that we haven't found it to be an unduly cumbersome operation. It functions well in that the time that it deals with Treasury Board is through developing the budget and putting the budget together, the same as other arms of government do. The day-to-day operations are managed by the executives in the corporation who report to the board, and then the board will take pertinent items to CIC.

So you're right; it's a hybrid Crown. It seems to function fairly well, and we believe it does a good job for the people of Saskatchewan.

(1615)

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, basically then there's sort of two types of bosses or two people you have to answer to, and I guess that probably makes life interesting at times. When I look at this sort of dual set-up, then it makes me think that it's possible to use the structure to shield financial activities from

one aspect, from one arm of it, to another. Can you give me your opinion on that?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, really the annual budget is set through our budget process that every arm of government goes through, with the exception of the Crowns of course. And I'm going to try and describe them as I know them and how that process works.

We will begin in the fall preparing for next year's budget. The Department of Finance will look through their revenue projections, through their expenditure projections, to try and determine what kind of pressures are on government for that fiscal year. We will ask the Water Corporation, as an example, the officials, to come before Treasury Board to describe ways in which they might be able to reduce the costs of operations without decreasing the effectiveness of the corporation, to look at where we can change programs to deliver a positive program at the least possible cost. And based on those kinds of discussions, the annual budget will be put together.

In terms of the Crown Investments Corporation, what will happen in that respect will be, the executive will bring to the board of the Water Corporation certain initiatives. They may or may not have financial impact on the corporation. The corporation does try and live within its budget that is set by Treasury Board. If there are major decisions that it's felt by the cabinet ministers on and by the board sitting on the Water Corporation Board that need, and we would want and desire, further scrutiny, those issues would then go to the Crown Investments Corporation on which, I believe, eight cabinet ministers sit. We have the officials from CIC with the ability to have, sort of, a sober second look at what we're doing, and then that recommendation would be made based on the information that would come from the Water Corporation.

But in terms of accountability, we still account to the legislature in this forum where we account for the expenditures and revenue flow, and this is the forum that I think can offer a good degree of public accountability. It serves us well in the other arms of the government and the executive arms of government.

So just the fact that some of the decision mechanism is reported to CIC doesn't preclude the fact that we want open and accountable scrutiny of the corporation by the Provincial Auditor and by members of the opposition and by members of the government caucus, because we're all here responsible and accountable for public funds, of which the allocation for the Water Corporation is part.

But the reporting mechanism doesn't in any way deter from public scrutiny and from public accountability in terms of the operations of the corporation. Those viewings are all very much open to public scrutiny.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, if Sask Water's a Crown corporation, is it going to be subject to the Crown review policy this summer?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, it's part of the Crown review.

Ms. Draude: — Sask Water has responsibilities as a project regulator but it also assumes the role as a project developer and owner. Who issues the construction and operating permits on Sask Water developed projects?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, I don't necessarily agree that Sask Water is a developer. What we view ourselves as being is a facilitator. If communities or municipalities come to us asking for assistance with respect to development of a water delivery system, we will offer and do offer engineering expertise, technical advice. We will look for funding opportunities and financing arrangements. We work with the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration), the federal arm that deals with these types of things.

But we don't view ourselves as being developers, only to help facilitate communities upon request to put together the kinds of help and put together the kinds of projects that they would desire for their areas.

Ms. Draude: — But there are circumstances and cases where you actually do design a project, and as such then somebody has to issue the permit. Do you issue that permit?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, we issue the permits for the developments. And I would want to say to the member, we also work with outside consultants in terms of the work that they do.

I want to say, in my limited experience putting together . . . and let me use the Humboldt-Wakaw pipeline as an example that you might be aware of. It's a fairly major project. It involves a number of communities, a number of municipalities. There have been private consultants that have looked at some of those initiatives. But I guess it takes someone overall, some body overall, to put together a project of that size. And we as a corporation are able to do that.

I know there are some who will criticize the corporation for taking private sector work away, simply because we have engineers and design people and technical people on staff. But I think it's fair to say that we need to maintain a core of expertise to facilitate and coordinate some of these larger projects. As I've said, we work with private consultants on many of these projects and we think that we have a reasonably good working relationship.

And I think it would be fair to say that as our economy in Saskatchewan was tight, things weren't happening, we didn't see a pile of capital projects, that professionals who are finding work fairly scarce will make the criticism that the public sector takes jobs away from the private sector. It's not our desire to want to do that. We need to have, and we feel we need to have, a core staff to be able to understand and develop and help to put these projects together. And that's really what we see our role as being.

Ms. Draude: — Yes but, Mr. Minister, if you actually do design the project and then you issue your own approval, that basically could be looked at as a conflict of interest because you're your own watchdog. Don't you agree?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I don't agree because with respect to the environmental approvals, that is all done by SERM, by Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management. They do an independent analysis separate and apart from the Water Corporation. So I think that there is adequate due diligence done on these projects. We, you know, we of course, as I said, deliver technical and engineering expertise and we have I think something to offer there. But we also know, as we're moving on some of these projects, that the environmental concerns need to be addressed, and so they are addressed in an arm's length from the Water Corporation body, and that's SERM.

Ms. Draude: — Have you had some of the projects that have been developed by Sask Water refused by Sask Environment?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I can say that the officials — using their memory, as their corporate memory might be a little stronger, a little longer than mine — can't recall a project that was refused by SERM. But there certainly have been projects that have been held up pending more information or pending changes to design that were felt not to be desirable. So we haven't had an outright refusal of a project, but the time frame in terms of development certainly has been held up until all of their concerns have been addressed.

Ms. Draude: — Has there been refusal by SERM to a proposal put forward by private companies?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — One of the parts of the work of the folks within the Water Corporation is to do assessment then, analysis of availability of water, availability of the resource. If someone is looking for licensing of a project and it is deemed that the consumption with respect to that resource, the water resource, is insufficient, if there is an application for wells to draw from an aquifer and it's decided by the technical people within the corporation that the aquifer as an example can't sustain the pressure that would be put on it by the expanded development, then clearly those would be areas where permits would be refused.

Ms. Draude: — I am sort of wandering in the dark here a little bit because . . . between you and your officials, I'm sure you have a lot more experience than I do. But I'm wondering if there's been a time when a proposal or two proposals has come in for similar projects or the same project, where SERM would have to decide between a Sask Water project and a private company's one, if that's ever happened.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I can say that that to our knowledge has never been a problem. I would think if there were a circumstance where there were competing interests it would be my suggestion that the Water Corporation and the board and I think the management, would certainly recommend that we not put together a development that would be in competition with private industry. I can't think of one that would be.

Our role is more one of facilitating development and projects and helping communities, helping business in areas where we can. We're not . . . the Water Corporation isn't in business.

We're there as a regulator. We're there as technical and engineering expertise and to help facilitate putting together projects, but we don't own projects. We don't intend to own projects. That's not part of where we want to head the corporation. There are other people out there who might be more appropriate people to do developmental work.

Ms. Draude: — Do you own the water?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The water resource in Saskatchewan is owned by the people of Saskatchewan through the province of Saskatchewan, and it's our role to manage that water on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Sask Water sits on the committee which distributes the federal money through PAWBED (Partnership Agreement on Water Based Economic Development), and I'm just wondering if it's conceivable that Sask Water can influence the allocation of these funds on the projects. Is this what you consider your mandate to be? Could this be seen as a conflict?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I don't think so. We use our technical people to give recommendations to management and I don't think it could be viewed as a conflict. There are many cases in which we will retain outside consultants, independent consultants.

I can name one example just around Prince Albert last year where there was a perceived conflict after studies were done by the city of Regina, by the Water Corporation. The Water Corporation retained a consultant from Calgary to do an analysis of this particular circumstance and that's how we would tend to operate. But in terms of the conflict it wouldn't be a situation that we would put ourselves in.

Ms. Draude: — Some of the recent activities of Sask Water sort of reminds me of the beginnings of SaskPower and SaskTel when they acquired the small generating stations and telephone exchanges, until they actually became utility monopolies.

Sask Water is offering utility systems to small communities throughout this province, and I'm wondering if it's Sask Water's intention to gain control of the municipal water and sewer system and become exclusive water and sewer utility.

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I don't think that's where we headed. The corporation will act when we are invited by communities and/or municipalities to help to put together projects.

If you're asking, is this the building of an empire, the answer I can say is no. We tend to view water management as a very critical part of what the Water Corporation does on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

With respect to development and assisting in development of projects, we go where we're asked. We don't own these facilities. You know, some we do quite clearly, some dam projects, larger projects. Some of them are owned by the federal

government.

But in terms of the distribution of water, we go where we're asked to go. And it's not that we're trying to build an infrastructure here, a monopolistic infrastructure; that's not where the corporation is headed.

Ms. Draude: — Many of the provincial Crowns have been going through a period of reorganization and restructuring and downsizing, and Sask Water has actually been hiring . . . has been expanding. I'm just wondering if the minister doesn't view the expansion of Sask Water to be inconsistent with the government's policy.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I can't . . . I can say to the member that we haven't been expanding. Two years ago we downsized by 10 per cent, which is a fairly substantial reduction.

But in terms of growing the corporation, I don't think that Water Corporation is inconsistent with what's happening in any of the other Crowns.

Ms. Draude: — I'm going to ask you a few questions more directly with conservation and development areas for a few minutes, and I'm wondering if . . . at the time I was working with them, conservation area authorities were very aggressive in their pursuit of drainage activities.

I'm wondering if there's still as many active C&Ds (conservation and development authorities) in the province as there was, say, five years ago.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I am told by my officials that there is a much different approach by CAAs (conservation area authorities) today than there would have been, say, five years ago — not nearly as aggressive in terms of those kinds of initiatives.

And I'm told that Nipawin is one area where that is really quite a dramatic change in how the CAAs are operating.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have just one question for you. Can you tell me if there's an environmental study holding up the C&D in the Langenburg area right now? There's been a lot of controversy over that thing and there seems to be a lot of misconceptions out there as to why this project is being held up. Can you give us some information on that?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This is, I guess, one example where projects are held up. The terms of reference are still being studied with respect to Langenburg east, so it's really in abeyance now until that has been completed.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One supplementary question possibly then. Is this the Environment departments from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the federal government? And do we have any idea of a time line on how long this could be before this project is either let proceed or stopped?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. The initiative and the study is a joint venture basically with the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Saskatchewan. The federal government is acting in an advisory capacity. And I am told that it will take three years to complete the study, and that's the time frame that they're looking at.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, can you tell me how many active conservation areas and watershed boards there are in the province right now?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To answer the question, there are 130 C&Ds on the books. There are 90 that are active, and I am told that that number is reducing by about 10 a year in the past history. There are six watershed associations in the province as well.

Ms. Draude: — In your opinion, would you explain to me why you think they are becoming inactive?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I guess the main reason would be a lack of projects that they wish to embark upon. If there is no activity required by people in certain areas, within a C&D association over a period of time, I would assume the association would make a determination that the need for them wasn't there. But I can say that if in fact the C&Ds can play a role, I am assuming that they would be established and they would be more active.

But I think the fact that about 10 a year are making the decision to discontinue their operations would suggest to me that they can't find or haven't identified meaningful programs or projects in their area that they would want to deal with.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I've had a number of calls, and I'm sure you have as well, about Fishing Lake and what's happening around there at this time with the rise in the water level and problems with the ice. I'm wondering if you can tell me what's happening there — why the water is rising to such an extent, and if there's any hope that we can give the residents around the lake some help.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, the situation at Fishing Lake is one that has been monitored by the Water Corporation and by the officials since 1960, so it's something that certainly has been monitored. We've been aware of that particular area.

The difficulty there is that there is no natural outlet; there is no outlet for that lake. In this particular year, we had an awful amount of run-off caused by a pile of snow. Cabin owners built their cabins, I think many of them, on the assumption that they would never see this level within the lake. But mother nature or father nature . . . nature has a way of sometimes playing tricks on us, and it manifests itself in some difficulties for cabin owners.

This has been I guess a particularly cruel year for us in Saskatchewan. I had the opportunity to view the southern and the eastern part of Saskatchewan last Friday, based on the water conditions and some of the concerns that people had offered to

my office and to the corporation. And there's just a tremendous amount of water, some of which we can't deal with. South of Regina is an example, sheet flooding. The water is there. In all likelihood, there will be a fairly substantial portion of farm land that won't be accessible because of the high moisture conditions. Those are things that we can't control. We can monitor, work at long-term planning in terms of how we might be able to alleviate some of these conditions.

And I think the same could be said for Fishing Lake. As I said, there's no natural outflow. There is no controlling mechanism in terms of inflow and outflow. And unfortunately there are a number of cabin owners that have been affected by that.

Ms. Draude: — Am I correct in hearing you say that there isn't a control structure that limits the amount of water going into Fishing Lake?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the conditions there are just caused by natural run-off. The spring conditions caused snow to melt, and it runs into the lake, and it has no where to go. So it's not a matter of a control mechanism that could have controlled the amount of inflow; it's just natural drainage based on the moisture conditions for this year.

Ms. Draude: — I understand as of this morning there was about 35 cabins that were basically under water, and they aren't able to get to them to even do sandbagging because the road is under water as well. Is there any plans to look at a possible outlet for this system?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I am to report to the member, Mr. Chair. I am told that in order to alleviate the condition on a permanent basis, there would have to be a ditching in the neighbourhood of some 30 kilometres. So in terms of the cost of this kind of an initiative to alleviate this condition from ever happening again, there would be millions of dollars that would have to be spent.

It's an unfortunate circumstance, and I guess it's good fortune for us that we don't have this kind of a spring every year because it would certainly make things much more uncomfortable every season. I can certainly sympathize with the cabin owners and the people who have that investment in the area, but the difficulty becomes finding a solution where you have some kind of economies that make some sense. And I am told this particular solution is something like 30 kilometres of ditching, and that's an awful lot of money.

Ms. Draude: — It sounds like the one-in-hundred flood I used to hear about when I was working with them, with the branch. Can you tell me how much money was spent on construction projects in 1996?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm assuming you'll be asking how much we spent in 1994 and in 1995, so what I'll do is share those figures with you.

In 1995, capital expenditures were \$6.368 million. In 1994, capital expenditures were \$5.723 million. So that was for the year '95 and '94.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me how many of these projects were involved in the Crown tendering project?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The total related to CCTA is \$1.274 million.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, do you have the figures available for the money spent on maintenance in 1995 on the conservation ditches and also the money spent on surveys?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, for 1995, the corporation spent \$338,211 in channel clearing. In terms of rural flood control which includes surveys, an amount of 1,354,476 was spent in that area. So 1,354,476 for rural flood control which includes the surveys.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I would suppose if there was a number of surveys that have been requested that there was insufficient funding to allow them to be undertaken. Do you have quite a number of those on the books?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This is such a simple answer, so it shouldn't maybe have taken me too long, but the officials tell me that they work on about half a dozen each year.

And in terms of outstanding, it's difficult to determine that because they come and they go. Groups will come in and ask for a preliminary survey. We do some of that work. It will be left on the table. You won't hear anything for a period of time, and sometimes they'll come back, and sometimes they won't. But I think it's fair to say that the answer would be we do about six a year.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me what the status of the request for surveys from St. Gregor south conservation and development is?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could I ask the member to repeat that again. I think I'm getting a little old and hard of hearing here.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me what the status of the St. Gregor south request for surveys is — St. Gregor south conservation development area?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That particular project came to the office, as I understand it, last fall. And it wasn't prioritized as being on the top of the list, but I am told that it now is, given the projects that we have on go, and that it will be dealt with this spring.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. They'll be really pleased to hear that.

I'm wondering if your department keeps copies of the audited financial statements of the conservation area authorities and the watershed boards.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'll commit to the member that we

will pass on what we have with respect to the audit and financial statements. I believe that we can request them, but we don't necessarily get them all but that we will pass on to the member what we have, the current update of what we have. And if there's more information that you would require, based on what we send, then we can undertake to get that for you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. A number of the conservation boards are speculating that perhaps one of the next moves may be the amalgamation of the conservation boards with the RM boards. Is that something that your department is considering at this time?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The officials are in the process of meeting with all of the CAAs to determine the effectiveness of these bodies. And I think until that study is complete, it would be difficult to describe to you what the future may hold for C&Ds, but I think it would be fair to say we are meeting with the stakeholders. We want to ensure that they're comfortable with the operations of the C&D, that they're doing an appropriate job meeting with the C&Ds. And this is ongoing.

I can say to you that there has been no decision by government or by the board — either of Municipal Government, by that department, or by the Water Corporation — with respect to an amalgamation of C&Ds with RMs. That's not a decision that has been made. But as I've indicated earlier, we're looking at the operations of them, how they fit into the scheme of things, and what the shareholders' reaction has been to them. But there's no preconceived plan here in terms of amalgamation with RMs.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure that most of the conservation boards will be delighted to hear that because in my discussions with them, it's not something that they feel will be beneficial to the landowners in the conservation areas.

I'd like to address a couple of questions on the money that Sask Water has given to Temple Gardens Mineral Spa. Can you tell me how much money was given to them?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — There are two areas of support for the spa project in Moose Jaw. As you will know, PAWBED is a joint organization between the provincial and federal government, and there was a grant through PAWBED of \$138,000. There's a developmental loan of \$125,000 that comes directly through the Water Corporation that is to be prepaid . . . or repaid, I'm sorry, with interest over a period of 14 years.

Ms. Draude: — Does the design work for Temple Gardens . . . I understand that your department did some of the design work for it. Did this project pay for Sask Water's staff and time for this design work?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, the entire project is amortized over a period of 14 years. All of the expenses incurred by the corporation are built into that amortized price, and it hopefully will be a good investment for the city of Moose Jaw, for that community. I know that the city is very excited about it. It's a project that they worked long and

hard to put together. There's certainly some community involvement in terms of financing. And I want to say that from my perspective, certainly as chairman of the board of the Water Corporation, we wish them well. I think it's an exciting venture for that community.

And I've known Moose Jaw . . . I guess I'll just say a couple of words about that. I've known that city for a long, long period of time. I grew up some 90 miles south-west of there, so Moose Jaw was our shopping community. And I've seen the changes in Moose Jaw over the years. Some have been positive, and some have been not so positive. Certainly they've gone through some difficult times. There's always the competition factor between Regina and Moose Jaw, as there is between my home town and Saskatoon, between P.A. (Prince Albert) and Saskatoon. So it's always a struggle for those communities to maintain their base, their population base, and all the economic activity.

So I can say that I'm really quite pleased for the city of Moose Jaw. The fact that they've been able to . . . Well they pressured a lot of people, and they've worked long and hard to put this project together. And I think the fact that the cost benefit analysis has been able to put together a project that will pay for itself over a period of time I think really is a feather in the hat to the people in that community. They've done a very good job.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And of course we as the Liberal caucus definitely wish Moose Jaw well, as well as you do. And I know you have a special interest in it, and I have a special interest in Watrous which is near my home town. And I'm just wondering if they had requested something in the same way as Moose Jaw had, if there was . . . because they are basically in direct competition. I'm wondering if the same type of status has been given to Watrous.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — To the member, I don't believe that there was a request from Watrous, but PAWBED funding, which is federal and provincial, through an application is certainly accessible. And we welcome applications. And as funding will allow, we're certainly more than willing to work with communities in terms of projects as it pertains to the development of water initiatives.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

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