

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Moose Jaw, and from Regina.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan that show us that the government has failed to address the serious concerns of landlords who provide rental accommodation to Saskatchewan renters. The prayer reads as follows:

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

The names on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Moose Jaw, Arelee, and Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

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

The majority of the people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Theodore, a community in my constituency, as well as Regina and Yorkton. I so present.

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 from Southey,

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

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Beaubier, Lake Alma, Minton, Gladmar, Estevan, Weyburn, and a few from Regina as well.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by a lot of concerned citizens in southern Saskatchewan ranging from Weyburn, of course through Regina — many from Regina — Montmartre, Crane Valley, Moose Jaw, Fort Qu'Appelle, Langenburg, Semans, Meadow Lake, Colgate, Swift Current, Gull Lake, Melville, Canora; a lot of concerned citizens, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise again 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 from Regina, Arcola, Corning, Kisbey; all over southern Saskatchewan.

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. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to Establish Regional Telephone Districts, short titled The Regional Telephone Districts Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give

notice that I shall on day no. 59 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance regarding order in council 282/96: (1) why was the order in council approved on April 30, '96 when the program ran from April 1, '95 to March 31 of 1996; (2) was this money included in the 1995-96 Saskatchewan estimates; if not, why; (3) which department was responsible for providing the \$7 million; and (4) which programs received the \$14 million and how was this money divided?

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 59 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Crown Investments, regarding the Crown Investments Corporation's interest in HARO Financial Corporation: (1) what was the amount of cash flow generated by HARO in the first quarter of 1996; (2) what was the amount of net earnings or losses generated by HARO in the first quarter of 1996?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, I'd like to introduce a group seated in the west gallery. These are a group of St. Timothy's Scouts. There are, as you can see, a large number of Scouts there — five, and their two leaders, Russell Littlemore and Jack Zess.

I'm not sure whether the five will be able to generate enough questions to keep us entertained for 20 minutes when I meet with them later or if I have to pull out my speech number three, but at any rate, I ask all colleagues to join me in welcoming the group to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and all members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of grade 7 school students from the Elizabeth School in Kindersley.

There are 42 students from Kindersley that have made the trip down here today, Mr. Speaker. Their teachers are Dave Burkell and Maureen Robbin. Their chaperons are Nancy Kelley, Tracey Baxter, Nancy Torrey, and their bus driver is Jim Baker.

I'd ask all members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to welcome them here to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I . . . a great pleasure for me to introduce, seated in your gallery, 40 seniors from Southey, Saskatchewan and their director, John Orban. You've got it listed as director; I don't think he would say that he was a director of them, but John Orban's with them.

Mr. Speaker, we owe so much to these seniors that have

contributed so much to our province and made it one of the greatest places in the world to live. And I want to right now publicly thank the seniors for that. Our generation owes them so much.

I look forward to meeting with them later and having a chat with them, and hope they enjoy their session here this morning and their tour of the building. And I would ask all members to please join with me in welcoming them here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to introduce someone to you in the Speaker's gallery who I don't get a frequent opportunity to introduce. She is one of the better farmers in my constituency, one of my supporters, and happens to be my wife, Cheralyn. And I want all of us to join in welcoming her here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was torn about whether I should actually be here today. I didn't know whether I'd get more harassment by being here or not being here this morning.

Anyway, in anticipation of an upcoming private member's statement — I don't know whether I require leave for this or not — but I was thinking maybe I should talk the clock out right till 1 o'clock, because I'm not sure what's going to be said about me.

But anyway, if I could just take a few liberties, first of all just by thanking everybody, all of the legislature including opposition as well. I really appreciated, as did Virginia, you coming out and celebrating with us and we really genuinely do appreciate that. So thank you very much.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, through you and to the other members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce a number of very special guests in the gallery. I'd like to begin with my parents — that's those who made it this morning, by the way — my parents, John and Dorothy Sonntag, if they'd stand, please. And seated beside them is my brother, Patrick, and his wife, Rita. Seated beside them is my new wife's parents, Paul and Nancy Wilkinson. In the back row is Jonathon Wilkinson . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I won't forget. And last and certainly not least, and most important, my new wife, Virginia Wilkinson.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sonntag-Wilkinson Wedding

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, today we want to demonstrate a rare act of unanimity with the members of the opposition. As the member from Melfort suggested yesterday,

this has been a significant week in the life of this legislature. I lost a room-mate and the member from Meadow Lake found a better-looking one.

But in the process, members on both sides of the House have become closer in our mutual support of one of our members. My colleagues on this side of the House want to join the member from Melfort in wishing the canoeist, my dear friend, and member from Meadow Lake constituency, and Virginia all the best in their new life together.

The vows were made late yesterday. They were graciously cemented by not one but two members of this Assembly, the reverend members from Moose Jaw Wakamow and Saskatoon Sutherland. This is a marriage off to a good start. As an aside, Mr. Speaker, I may be wrong, but I think this is the first special caucus meeting in living memory at which a sitting member was married — another reason why this week is special. When good things happen to good friends, we are all better for it. For myself, I've not lost a room-mate; I've gained a place to go for Sunday dinner.

We wish both of you all the best in your married life. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal Task Force on Youth

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Saskatoon I had the pleasure of attending a town hall meeting focusing on youth. The meeting was part of a federal government task force on youth. I would like to commend the many people who attended the meeting, including three people from my constituency. They were Diane Olchowski, representing REDA (regional economic development authority); Erin Kun, a student from Bruno; and Jeremy Elder, a student from Humboldt Collegiate who spoke on behalf of the students of Saskatchewan.

This meeting focused on the needs and aspirations of people now in school and how they can more easily make the transition from school into the workforce. The discussions that followed resulted in some very valuable and creative suggestions. I was pleased to be part of those discussions, and I would like to commend highly the federal government and everyone who participated and took the initiatives that they did on behalf of our very valuable resource — our youth. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Life Report

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, regardless of where we live in Saskatchewan it's good for all of us when a provincial business does well. It boosts our economy, it increases the contributions to the government coffers, and of course in this case it employs about a thousand people. And of course I'm referring to the annual meeting held in Regina recently and the report of Crown Life that they have . . . having

its third consecutive year of increasing profits and expanding business.

And I would want to congratulate Brian Johnson and the management of Crown Life and the board of directors, and quote Mr. Johnson when he said: "We do see a trend of improving performance continuing. The company sales are up everywhere in Canada."

Mr. Speaker, this bodes well for the city of Regina and the province of Saskatchewan. And last year, Mr. Speaker, the company posted a \$47 million profit and 45 million in 1994 and so far this year the profits are up 9 per cent over last year.

So I want to express on behalf of all members of the Assembly our special congratulations to the management, but most importantly the thousand or so good souls who work in this company here in the city of Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Resignation of Melfort Mustangs Coach

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members of this Assembly have heard me speak often about the Melfort Mustang Hockey Club. Well today I have to announce that it's with some regret that I acknowledge the fact that head coach Kevin Dickie has submitted his resignation effective May 31 of this year.

I and the community of Melfort cannot express how much we owe to the talents of this one individual. Kevin and his wife Cindy came to Melfort five years ago. Since that time Kevin has coached the Melfort Mustangs for five years, winning the division four times out of five, the league twice, and then going on this year alone to capture the Hanbidge Cup, the Anavet Cup, the Abbott Cup, and were runners-up at the Royal Bank Cup.

This shows the kind of dedication that Kevin has shown to this community. When interviewed on his success, Kevin has always attributed the success to the support of the fans, volunteers, and the hockey club.

Please join me in congratulating head coach Kevin Dickie, thank him for all that he's done for the Melfort community, and bid he and his wife Cindy and young family best wishes in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence Awards

Ms. Lorje: — While some of us were dancing the night away in Regina, there was an important black-tie affair held in Saskatoon yesterday, the first annual SABEX award dinner. SABEX stands for Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence. These awards have been established by the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority.

Before announcing the winners, first a few statistics. Five hundred and fifty people attended the ceremony. There were 31 finalists in seven categories. All finalists were worthy nominees.

And the winners were: Forvest Broadcasting as business of the year; they also won the marketing award. Standard Machine took home the innovation award. Bioriginal Food and Science Corporation captured the export prize.

The new product award went to Display Systems International. Early's Farm and Garden Centre, an old friend to green thumb enthusiasts, was given the well-deserved customer service award. National Refrigeration froze out the new business prize.

Finally, the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* blacked out the community involvement prize. And it is my fond hope that they deserve it again next year.

I congratulate all winners and all nominees for contributing to Saskatoon's successful economic ambience.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sonntag-Wilkinson Wedding

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the hon. member from Rosetown-Elrose in offering, on behalf of our caucus, our most sincere congratulations to the member from Meadow Lake and his new family and his new wife, Virginia.

Virginia, from the brief occasions that I've had to visit and speak with Maynard over the years, I've found him to be, just as you have I'm sure, a very truly honourable gentleman, and I look forward to the invitation some time to take part in a visit with you people.

It is truly a momentous occasion, I think, when someone joins in marriage like you two have, and particularly under the circumstances of being here at the legislature. So we would like to offer our sincere congratulations and best wishes in your endeavours in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Syttende Mai

Hon. Mr. Nilson: —

Ja, vi elsker dette landet,
som det stiger frem
furet, værbitt over vannet
med de tusen hjem.
Elsker, elsker det og tenker
på vår far og mor
og den saganat, som senker
drømme på vor jord.

Today is Syttende Mai, the 17th of May, and that was the first verse of the Norwegian national anthem.

On May 17, 1814 at Eidsvoll, Norway, 112 members of a constituent assembly approved the new Constitution of Norway. This small, primarily rural country of just under 1 million people asserted its independence in the turmoil surrounding the Napoleonic wars. Based on the French Constitution of 1791, it added special rights and privileges for farmers. This constitution is still in use in Norway, making it the second oldest after the U.S. (United States) Constitution.

Norway today has about four and a half million people, but there are over 5 million descendants living around the world. Celebrations of the 17th of May take place in all corners of the earth.

Today we join with all Norwegian descendants in Saskatchewan as we celebrate this Norwegian national day, especially the residents of Birch Hills and Weldon, Saskatoon, Estevan, Outlook, and Regina, where special parties are taking place.

So I ask all members to join with the Norwegian descendants in the Assembly, the members from Saltcoats, Weyburn, Saskatoon Southeast, Regina Sherwood, Regina Coronation Park, and Regina Lakeview, and the honorary Norwegian, the member from Lloydminster, in recognizing this important day for all Norwegian Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Providence Place

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring to the attention of this House the growing concern over this government's decision to break its promise to fund the geriatric unit of Providence Place in Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow wrongly insists this is strictly an issue of concern to Moose Jaw residents. I will however grant that many constituents who voted for that member did so because they believed such a facility would be available for their relatives and themselves in times of need. These people are deeply concerned by the stance taken by this government and that member.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the Minister of Health and the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow to reconsider their positions. I'd like to give them another chance to do so, and I would like to send over a number of letters from members of the Avonlea United Church who are concerned about what this government is doing to the geriatric unit at Providence Place. It's my hope that the minister will inform these concerned Thunder Creek constituents that he's prepared to keep his promise on funding this valuable unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Highway Maintenance

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're heading into a long weekend, and of course one of the busiest

times on Saskatchewan highways. With the high level of traffic, the chance of accidents goes up. Many families with children will be on the highways this weekend, Mr. Speaker. The condition of Saskatchewan highways adds to the danger.

Mr. Speaker, if this government truly wants to make the safety of Saskatchewan travellers a priority, when will the minister start listening to the complaints of Saskatchewan drivers and assume his responsibility for repairing our crumbling highway system in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I want to thank the member for the question. I think the member realizes certainly that Saskatchewan has 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada. I'm sure he realizes, from a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) report not too long ago, that if you attached each road in Saskatchewan you'd circle the globe four times.

When you take that into account, and our population which has to pay for the maintenance and the preservation of this road; and take an account of what the federal government has done, Mr. Speaker, with the cut-backs in health care and social programs and education where we have to back-fill that money; and then you also take a look at what the Tories did over the past 10 years when they were in power, Mr. Speaker — we have \$851 million of interest that we have to pay each and every year — so I believe that the Department of Highways is doing an extremely good job under those circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Saskatchewan people are a bit tired of hearing this government passing the blame on to everyone else other than themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that Saskatchewan tourism season gets under full swing this weekend with the opening of provincial parks. Tourism Saskatchewan is also trying to entice travellers to our province to find \$15,000 in gold. With the deplorable conditions of the Saskatchewan highways and roads, I'd say the gold treasure is fairly safe. If this government truly wants to encourage tourism growth in this province, the Minister of Highways must start paving the way for success.

Will the Minister of Highways tell the owners of Saskatchewan resorts and campgrounds that he is committed to their economic well-being and will take the necessary steps to improve the highway conditions for holiday travellers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I want to thank the member for the question. Certainly tourism is a bright spot in Saskatchewan. It's increasing every year, as is economic development in the province of Saskatchewan — oil industry, forest industry, and you can go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say that under the circumstances that the department faces, we are looking at different ways of funding

roads — like partnerships with the private sector, Mr. Speaker, new technologies like low tire pressure. We're also looking at better planning with rural municipalities and urban municipalities to spend the limited funds that are available more wisely.

And I want to tell the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that during the past budget we in fact took \$6 million out of administration in the Department of Highways and we're putting that funding back into roads.

And I know what the member would like; he would like to spend and spend and spend, and on the other hand reduce taxes and reduce taxes and reduce taxes. What I think would happen, Mr. Speaker, if that member was on this side of the House, we would have the same problem we had when the Tories were in power — large debts and large interest bills.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporations Review

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Minister, this morning you and the Minister of Economic Development announced that your government will be holding public consultations to be held in conjunction with CIC's (Crown Investments Corporation) review of Crown corporations. What seems particularly amazing, however, is that every location for these public meetings is in a constituency held by a member opposite.

You also weren't able to tell anybody what this process will cost taxpayers. The process is already behind schedule, and in the long run you say the government makes the decision anyway, finally.

Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with a multi-billion dollar taxpayer investment that will have a dramatic impact on the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, will you tell the Assembly today how much it will cost to fill town halls with NDP (New Democratic Party) supporters in order to drive home your preconceived notions of the future of these Crowns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to answer the question on behalf of the government and remind the members of the House and the member opposite in particular that the Crown review is intended to give our very strong collection of Crown corporations a check-up. They have performed exceptionally well in providing employment and job opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan and revenue for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And they are now facing a deregulated — thanks to successive Tory and Liberal governments — deregulated, highly competitive environment and world in which they live.

The objective of the Crown review is make sure that the Crown

corporations continue to be viable, strong forces for our economy in the 21st century. The total cost with respect to the actual review are going to be determined at the end of the day when the review is completed. But I can tell the hon. member opposite that they will be relatively, very, very small when compared about the importance of a review of a \$7 billion portfolio, which is what they're intended to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Data Centre Closure

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the media is reporting this morning that the Bank of Nova Scotia is closing its Saskatchewan data centre. It and the 57 positions will be transferred to Calgary. That's an all too familiar story. Given the fact that the NDP government gave a considerable amount of money and effort to bring the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) call centre to this province, will the Minister of Economic Development explain what efforts he and his government are making to keep this data centre in Saskatchewan? Are you simply just going to wave good-bye to these families and employees as they pack up and leave this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the question from the member opposite. One of the most important things that we are trying to do here is to work with companies who have moved here from other provinces. And we're trying to get control of the Liberal caucus, who by Brian Johnson's admission, is trying to destroy companies and lose jobs for the province of Saskatchewan. That's the first thing that I think many business people are now telling me.

And we're beginning to get a litany of letters from business people and you are too, I'm sure, Madam Member, because companies are saying that one of the worst, bad creators of image for the province in fact, is that Liberal caucus continually talking negative about the economy of the province, when what we need is a positive attitude and believing in the business people in the province.

I attended SABEX awards last night in Saskatoon; huge optimism about the economy. I only ask you to come onside with the business community; join us, become more positive, and help out the economy of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporations Review

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for the Premier or the minister responsible for CIC. Mr. Premier, our caucus welcomes the Crown corporation review process announced this morning. However we remain concerned about whether your government is truly committed to real consideration of privatization.

There have been conflicting messages coming out of your

government. Shortly after the review was announced back in February, Barb Byers said the minister had personally assured her that privatization was not on the table. A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Premier, you seemed to indicate your government had no intention of privatizing SaskTel.

The minister himself has called privatization an extreme position. Mr. Premier, will you give us a clear answer today. Within your check-up, as you called it, of Crown corporations, will you be looking at privatization as an option?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I think what has to be absolutely clear to the people of Saskatchewan — and I want to underline it again here this morning — is that there is a huge gulf between the government and the members who support this government and those of the Conservative and Liberal caucuses. And it's a gulf based on a fundamental ideological commitment by the Conservatives and by the Liberals to pursue a policy of privatization.

Federally we've seen the privatization of Canadian National Railways and Air Canada, and others are on the chopping block. And we all know the experience of what the former Conservative government did with respect . . . or attempted to do with the former SaskEnergy, still currently in Crown corporation.

An Hon. Member: — How about PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.)?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And the member says, what about PCS? And yes, PCS was privatized, I might add, at a book loss to the people of Saskatchewan in the order of \$600 million, which if we had today we'd be able to do a lot of things for health care and for highways and other questions raised here.

We are asking our experts in this area to give us the best, most efficient, honest appraisal of the Crown corporations to make sure that they continue to be a viable, healthy enterprise vehicle to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, I'm very pleased that your review committee included Frank Proto, who is president of a company that went through a very successful privatization. Earlier this year, taxpayers saw the rewards of another very successful privatization when you sold off millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, of Cameco shares.

Mr. Premier, the Manitoba government is currently in the process of privatizing their telephone company, MTS (Manitoba Telephone System), through a private share offering that gives Manitobans the first opportunity to buy shares.

Mr. Premier, will you be looking at this, at privatization, as part of your review, and would you consider privatizing SaskTel through a similar share offering?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I think this question very clearly, very vividly, shows the difference of approach by the Conservatives and our government. The question is predicated that any review of the Crowns must be premised on the notion of privatization. All the questions are, will we consider the privatization of SaskTel, like we do with Manitoba Tel, as they're doing in Manitoba? He points to all the advantages, as he sees it, of privatization.

He would have a Crown review which has one objective in mind, and that is to sell off those assets which don't belong to us as individuals but belong to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, which assets have provided jobs, employment, have been able to compete in the world, and do so very effectively.

What this Crown review is doing is giving our Crown corporations a check-up. Make sure that they can continue doing what they're doing for the 21st century. Because we build the economy in this province, we believe, unlike the Tories which put all their faith in the private enterprise system full stop period, by a mixed economy — private, cooperative, and public sector working in tandem. That's the difference.

And we want an honest, complete, total review by experts upon which we can base our intelligent decisions thereafter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Patronage Appointments

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. In 1994 the NDP celebrated a 50th anniversary — the golden anniversary of the first CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government. And 1996 is another big year for the NDP because it marks the golden anniversary of NDP patronage.

We have now identified 50 former NDP MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), candidates, and candidates for nomination who have received some type of patronage appointment from this NDP government — 50, Mr. Premier. And that's not even counting the NDP activists or the Premier's former law partners.

Mr. Premier, what happened to your commitment to end patronage, and why are we now celebrating the golden anniversary of NDP patronage?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that the process that we went through after the defeat of the Devine government in 1991 was a process of reviewing the appointments to many boards. We have set up, obviously, health care boards, and there are a myriad of processes where the public is involved.

Obviously there are qualified Liberals who sit on some boards. In fact Harold MacKay co-chairs the PACE (Provincial Action Committee on the Economy) committee which is doing the review of the Crown corporations. And when he was attacked in the House, it came as a surprise to the members opposite that

he was a long-term Liberal. Everyone else in the world knew. It makes you wonder how long they have been around.

There are actually . . . if you did the same review of all of the boards and commissions, I'm sure you would come up with a list of as many names of people with Conservative and Liberal backgrounds.

One should not be surprised that when you review thousands of names, that some will have a political background in various parties. The only thing I would ask and urge you is to identify your own members. Study it. Analyse it, because in winning elections you should know those kind of things.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the case of Mr. MacKay, an NDP and a Liberal — what's the difference?

Mr. Speaker:

The endemic and virulent practice of plugging partisan MLAs from the governing party into various agencies, boards, and commissions will stop. Partisan people, party people, and defeated MLAs and candidates ought not to serve on those boards. If we don't succeed and continue to appoint party hacks, then I've got nowhere.

Does that sound familiar, Mr. Premier? It should, because those were your exact words from 1991, but it seems you have a different song book now.

Our caucus has introduced a private members' Bill to have an all-party committee review appointments to boards and commissions. Those appointments would be based on merits rather than political affiliations.

Mr. Premier, will you live up to the commitment you made back in 1991 by supporting our private members' Bill; or do we have to wait until we're celebrating the centennial or the bicentennial of your patronage appointments?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think the members opposite have learned one piece of history — that they're probably going to have to wait 50 years, as they did after 1929, before they're in government again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Because, Mr. Speaker, not unlike the Anderson government who was in power from 1929 to 1934 or '35 — it took people 50 years to forget that mess and depression that they created — there likely will take 50 years to forget the Devine administration as well.

But I want to say in terms of appointment we, unlike the former Devine government, do not go down the political list and appoint the hacks from your party. In fact you will be interested to know that just recently we appointed the former Conservative minister, Neal Hardy, to the Potash Revenue Review Board.

And so I say to the members opposite, if you have partisan people who are qualified, qualified people, put them forward; we will look at and review them. But one thing I would urge you, is to be selective because there are many of those people who helped run your administration that the public would have a great deal of difficulty with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Providence Place

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, community organizations that donated millions of dollars to build Providence Place and its geriatric unit in Moose Jaw met last week. At this meeting, the only geriatrician in our province indicated that he'd been approached by Regina Health District officials to head a geriatric program in this city.

Mr. Speaker, last fall the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow promised local officials that the Department of Health would encourage districts across the province to use the geriatric services of the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek Health District.

Will the Minister of Health explain why he is shutting down a state-of-the-art and successful unit in Moose Jaw only to see it move to Regina. Or was moving it to Regina part of the plan all along?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I want to state categorically to the member that there is no plan on the part of the department to shut down the geriatric assessment unit in Moose Jaw, nor is there a plan to move anything to Regina.

The Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek District Health Board has done its own planning in the community. It is working with Providence Place to attempt to come up with a resolution to the issue.

There is a dispute between Providence Place, which has received a lot of provincial funding, Mr. Speaker, and the district health board about the level of funding that Providence Place should receive. But I have every confidence that the district health board and Providence Place, working in good faith to resolve their differences, will come up with a solution that will provide an acceptable level of geriatric assessment in Moose Jaw and an appropriate use for the beds in the geriatric assessment unit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I think the solution they'll arrive at is that they'll want the government to come through with what they had promised, which was separate funding for that unit. The Sisters of Providence helped finance the construction of the geriatric unit because of this NDP government's promise of secure funding.

They took this government at its word and also spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to train this geriatrician and his staff at

both the University of B.C. (British Columbia) and the University of Alberta. Now because of this broken promise and the impending closure of the geriatric unit at Providence Place, the province's only geriatrician may leave the province. Two people trained on the geriatric team have already left because of the uncertainty, and one of the two internal medicine specialists is poised to leave.

Will the minister explain how he can betray the Sisters of Providence after they put forward so much time, energy, and money to make the geriatric unit a reality? How can you shatter their dream, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the district health board in Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek will develop an appropriate use for the 28 beds on the unit, in cooperation with Providence Place. And I believe that the district and Providence Place, working together, will come up with an appropriate, community-based method of providing geriatric assessment in Moose Jaw.

This is a dispute between Providence Place and the district health board about the level of funding. That's what it is, Mr. Speaker. The district is funded on a population base and needs-based system. The funding is equitable throughout the province. I am confident that the parties, working together without the kind of political interference that the member is advocating, will come up with an acceptable solution, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Reform

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an editorial appeared in this week's edition of *The Melfort Journal* which sums up how many Saskatchewan residents are feeling about the state of health care in this province.

This article refers to the elimination of the Nirvana Pioneer Villa. It notes that the Melfort hospital has been transformed from a regional facility serving the people of north-east Saskatchewan to a mere shadow of itself with less than half the beds it once offered. It also states, and I quote:

Simply put, health reform in the Melfort district has been a failure. It has resulted in the loss of many aspects of health care that this same government promised to protect only a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health explain how his actions in any way live up to the commitment of health care in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, this province has for 30 years been a leader in terms of meeting the health care needs of its citizens. And this province continues to be a leader in that

regard, Mr. Speaker, and we are recognized across the country for providing leadership.

And what we are doing is building a health care system that is sustainable. What the member opposite wants to do and repeatedly does, Mr. Speaker, is to get up and suggest that the people are not going to be taken care of. And nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

We are going to ensure that there is appropriate long-term care for people. The local health board in Melfort has a plan, as the member knows, to replace the beds that are being shut down at Nirvana. They have a plan in the long term for the use of Nirvana; they have a plan in the long term for a new facility in Melfort, Mr. Speaker. The member knows that.

The member's trying to suggest that the people will not be taken care of, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth, and that would be inconsistent with the record of this province when it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, a letter also appeared in last week's edition of the *Nipawin Journal* which provides another indication of the crisis that currently exists in the health care system. And since the member from Carrot River Valley refuses to raise the concerns of these residents, I will.

Mr. Speaker, this letter notes that the Carrot River Hospital will soon be losing emergency services on the weekends, and states, and I quote:

We might as well lock the door and throw away the key. We, the citizens of Carrot River, have no say. Do they not realize the impact that this will have on this community and surrounding area? Apparently not! This is just another step to undermine health care in Carrot River.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain what is next for the people of Carrot River — a so-called health centre, or perhaps nothing at all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the health board in the area will make decisions as to the appropriate services for the people in the area. But I want to say to the member that what bothers me about he and his party's continual harping about the level of health care spending is the simple fact, and I know the member doesn't like to hear it, that the federal Liberals have cut \$50 million in health care spending for the province of Saskatchewan this year; and the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we back-filled and put in a dollar for every dollar they took out of the health care system. And the fact is that if we had not done that, if we had let the Liberal cuts stand, Mr. Speaker — because we do believe in the health care system — the effect on the health districts in this province, Mr. Speaker, would have been 10 times what it is because of our commitment to funding health care, a commitment not shared by the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House yet another editorial from this week's edition of the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times*. This article notes that the Premier has established a perfect illusion. It states and I quote:

The Great Roydini sets up the . . . (policy) by announcing his government will move . . . (more responsibly) for health care closer to the people . . .

He does (it) by creating district health boards.

The real purpose of the boards of course is to deflect the crap that's going to fly when the government starts turning off the money tap.

It's an almost perfect deal for the province.

However, it's not so great . . . (when) you're a local person sitting on one of these boards and trying to do some good.

Will the minister explain if he is prepared to take responsibility for health care and end this illusion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, what the member isn't saying when he says the district health boards were created is the fact that there were 410 health boards before the 30 districts were created, Mr. Speaker. And they were created to coordinate and rationalize health care in Saskatchewan so that we could have a sustainable medical system, a sustainable medicare system, in the future.

And what is the member saying, Mr. Speaker? Is he saying that local people should not be involved in making health care decisions? If that's what he's saying, then I think the member should say so, Mr. Speaker. But if he's asking me, are we going to continue to involve local people in planning health care in the districts throughout the province, yes we are, because when we work with the local people, Mr. Speaker, we will do what we're committed to do. We will build a strong and sustainable health care system that will serve us well in the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Community Meetings Set for Crown Corporation Review

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a brief statement regarding a matter of some considerable interest to the people of Saskatchewan. Earlier this morning, I announced at a press conference the outline of locations, dates, and the format of a series of public meetings to be held in conjunction with CIC's review of Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker will know that earlier this year I announced the review of SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskEnergy, Sask Government Insurance, the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and the industrial holdings of Crown Investments Corporation.

This three-part review will include an expert evaluation of the fiscal health of these Crown corporations and their assets, a review of the role of Crowns in the provincial economy and an examination of the public's expectations and perceptions of the Crowns.

In conjunction with this review, Mr. Speaker, public meetings will be held June 10 in Rosetown, June 11 in Lloydminster, June 12 in Swift Current, June 13 in Moose Jaw, June 14 in Estevan, June 17 in North Battleford, June 18 in Prince Albert, June 19 in La Ronge, June 20 in Nipawin, June 21 in Yorkton, June 24 in Saskatoon, and June 25 in Regina.

I have asked the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy to organize this portion of the Crown corporation review. In response, PACE has established a subcommittee, Talking About Saskatchewan Crowns, or TASC, which is organized and will run these meetings.

What we have put together is a process which will allow a large number of Saskatchewan people to join in an issues-driven discussion of the future of our Crowns in Saskatchewan. I am comfortable that we have a process which will allow anyone who wishes to address this issue to do so.

We have asked TASC to ensure that the discussion taking place at these meetings is as wide-ranging as possible and that all ideas get a fair hearing. We have in TASC what I think is a blue ribbon committee of concerned Saskatchewan individuals who are committed to our province and to helping to build our economy.

Will Olive, senior partner in the Regina law firm Olive Waller Zinkhan and Waller, will serve as chairman of the TASC committee. Other members are Frank Proto, president and CEO (chief executive officer) of Wascana Energy Incorporated; Gord Steininger, national representative of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada; and Ray Ahenakew, executive director of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

As well as the public meetings, groups that wish to submit written briefs can do so until July 5. In addition, the three main political parties in the province have been contacted and have been asked to submit briefs. The briefs received from the political parties will be attached unedited to the final report of the review.

TASC will report the results of the public meetings to a major conference on Crown corporations to be held in the fall. As well, the report of the meetings will be submitted to CIC for inclusion in the final report of the entire review process. Mr. Speaker, these meetings and this entire review are important to our province and the future of our province. I urge all members of this Assembly and all Saskatchewan people to take a very active part in this process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement

as well. And I would also agree with him that the meetings and the review process are a very important part of the future of this province.

And as I've stated earlier, we do have some concerns surrounding the open-ended nature of the costs concerning the undertaking that's before us. I think it would have been more appropriate to have at least provided some estimate of what this may have cost, and also with respect to location, so I won't belabour that point.

But I also want to mention the fact that I was a little bit concerned with the Premier's comments concerning the Crown corporations and the review and where he made the statement that it was necessary to maintain a viable and healthy Crown sector. However, he forgot to mention one very important aspect of all of this is that we also have to undertake to make sure that the Crown sector remains accountable to the people of this province.

So in that respect I think this review could become quite relevant to where we're at in 1996 in terms of reviewing the role of Crowns in this provincial economy that we find ourselves in right now. And I also note with a great degree of interest that we will be able to submit an unedited copy of a briefing that we certainly will be presenting, as official opposition, with respect to the review of the Crown sector.

And we as official opposition, before I take my seat, guarantee the members opposite that we will be doing everything we can to make this review process as meaningful as possible to the people of this province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly we agree, as we mentioned earlier in question period, with the review process. We think that it is a step in the right direction in terms of providing a check-up, as the Premier has called it, on the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan.

We think that indeed the review should include all options, including public ownership, including privatization, should be a part of the review process. The Premier says that we want only privatization. That could be no further . . . it's very far from the truth, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is, is that we believe it should be an option, though. We think that in this area of deregulation and increasing global competition, that government should not be hiding behind their philosophy of only state ownership of public utilities. We think that privatization is a viable option. It's something that's being looked at in other provinces, most recently being looked at in Manitoba.

I can't help, Mr. Speaker, but to think back to the dinner that I attended not too long ago, and the member from Regina Northeast was in attendance as well, when the president and CEO of Hewlett-Packard (Canada) talked about privatization and talked about the relative value of operations like telephone utilities. And he talked about SaskTel specifically as being an excellent-run public institution that is worth considerable value

to the Saskatchewan taxpayers.

But he also — and the member is, I'm sure, aware of this — he also spoke about, is the relative value of that corporation going to be still there in the not too distant future, when you consider global economies, when you consider deregulation, and you consider all of the challenges that are going to be placed before public-ownership utilities?

He talked about the fact that we're into wireless technology now, Mr. Speaker, and how wire technology, which is primarily what SaskTel provides to the people of Saskatchewan, may become obsolete in the not too distant future. And he was suggesting that while there is considerable value in SaskTel right now, it may not be there in the future.

And that is why . . . And I'm sure the member from Regina Northeast recalls that conversation, that speech that he provided, and how that should be an option. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, we think that it should be an option. That's why we believe that the Crown corporation review is an important step in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go on record here today as making a prediction. I'm going to go on record as suggesting that I think, following this review, the NDP will do it. The NDP will privatize SaskTel because they will conclude the same as everyone else is concluding, that there is value there but there may not be in the future and they may as well get the value out of it while they can.

So I think they will do it. I think they'll do the right thing because they know it is the right thing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, a group from the Corning School, five grade 4 and grade 5 students, along with their teacher, Sharon McCarthy.

I'm sure that what they make up for volume of students, Mr. Speaker, they more than make up for in enthusiasm and in eagerness to learn.

I would ask everyone to welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1100)

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, the Speaker would like to bring a ruling.

Yesterday the Government House Leader raised a point of order respecting the procedural acceptability of several oral questions about SaskPower policies and amendments to the SaskPower Act that are currently before the House.

Citations from Beauchesne and May were quoted to support the contention that questions may not seek information about proceedings in a committee which has not reported — quoting Beauchesne's 5th edition, page 133, paragraph 360 — and questions may not refer to the consideration of matters by a parliamentary committee; Erskine May, 21st edition, page 290.

These citations, however, are not applicable to the circumstances of this case where the annual reports and financial statements of Crown corporations stand permanently referred to a standing committee of the Assembly, the Crown Corporations Committee. This is not a case where a specific issue has been referred to a committee for investigation and report.

A parallel situation occurred yesterday in the House of Commons where oral questions dealt at some length with the issue of a Revenue Canada ruling on family trusts while the Public Accounts Committee was holding hearings on the same matter.

It is not the practice of this Assembly to use the grounds that all corporations may be reviewed by the Crown Corporations Committee to restrict all questions in the House on Crown corporations. On the contrary, procedures in the Crown Corporations Committee restrict members from debating policy matters in that committee. It has long been the rule that the proper place to debate the policy of a Crown corporation is in the House. Crown corporations are frequently the subject of not only oral questions but of written questions, motions, returns, and in some instances, questions in Committee of Finance.

One reason there is some confusion about this matter is that it is common for ministers to advise members to ask such questions in the relevant standing committee or in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Finance. And it is procedurally quite acceptable for the minister to answer in that way. However that does not in itself make the question out of order.

The second part of the point of order was that oral questions dealing with legislation currently before the House are not in order in oral question period. It is true that oral questions relating to specific clauses and details of a Bill may be ruled out of order. As such, questions may be more appropriately addressed in Committee of the Whole. But it has never been the practice to prevent oral questions from dealing with the principle of a Bill or the public policy matters reflected in it. If such questions were prohibited, it would make it possible for members to prevent a sensitive issue from being raised in question period merely by introducing a Bill relating to the matter and letting it sit on the order paper.

I have carefully reviewed the transcript from Thursday's question period and find that both the questions and the answers were in order. The questions themselves addressed matters of policy and are most appropriate to be asked in question period and thus the point of order is not well taken.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I table the answer to question 98.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 98 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 87

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 87 — An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act (No. 2)** be now read a second time.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise once again and address Bill 87 which is the proposed Act to amend The Power Corporation Act (No. 2).

When I was up a few days ago, I made a couple of clear points on this Bill. It's my hope that the members opposite will seriously consider them and start getting back on track and get back to the job of serving our families before they serve their family of Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous remarks, I pointed out to the members opposite that this Bill is very much a concern. It's a concern because it proposes to give SaskPower more powers to spend, invest, and make deals with taxpayers' money without the government making any changes to our badly tattered system of accountability. It makes sense that if those who wield power are given more powers and controls, those who serve as their watchdogs should also be given more tools to ensure those powers are being well used in the public's interest.

Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what is not happening here. The members opposite may wish to say that this Bill is just a matter of bringing SaskPower into line with the other major Crowns. That seems benign or nice enough. But, Mr. Speaker, it brushes a serious problem posed by our tattered system of accountability out of sight. As we all know, a problem out of sight shouldn't be a problem cast from our memory.

Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this province has a pretty long memory for what happened in the Devine era. I think everyone has a pretty good memory for the Blakeney era where the Crown corporations got rich while the rest of our families didn't fare as well.

Mr. Speaker, simply put, this government deserves no more powers for any of its Crowns until it shows to the people of Saskatchewan that it intends to use those powers wisely. To continue to ask for more powers for this Crown or any other, without showing any willingness to update or improve the system of accountability, is a sign that this government does not intend to see these powers used wisely.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is a fine example of how to misuse powers. Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite get what they ask for in this Bill, I don't believe these powers will be used wisely. I think many other people in this province also have their doubts.

If SaskPower gets these powers, the man in charge of deciding to spend, sell, or deal with personal property, property I might add that belongs to the taxpayers, will be none other than Mr. Jack Messer himself. That, Mr. Speaker, is a concern to all Saskatchewan people. The fact that he would be wielding these powers or playing a major role in doing so is a sign this government cannot be trusted to use these powers responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, they want to give him free rein to spend money that rightfully belongs to the taxpayers however he chooses, and this government has no concerns about letting this happen. They have no concern because they are sure he will have to go to his board for approval for corporate plans.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one has to wonder whether this person can be counted on to represent our best interest. One has to wonder what sort of control a board could have over this individual if a Bill like this is passed.

Mr. Speaker, I say one has to wonder, because there's no chance to make sure. The people of this province witnessed on several occasions Mr. Messer's poor judgement with respect to spending quite small sums of money. When he got into the president's office at SaskPower, he felt the digs were a little too drab and he blew a bunch of money with renovations. These elaborate renovations were not necessary, especially in a time of restraint. If the president's washroom was good enough for George Hill and his wealthy tastes, then it surely should have been good enough for Jack Messer.

Mr. Messer held no concern for the fact our province had the highest per capita deficit and debt in the doubt . . . in the country. He had no concern for the fact that a significant portion of the debt was held by the corporation he was entrusted to administer.

Mr. Speaker, he demonstrated that he could not be counted upon to make decisions on small things which would benefit the people of Saskatchewan. Why then should we count on him to handle greater responsibilities?

Mr. Speaker, obviously the board wasn't quick enough to stop Mr. Messer on that one.

They were no quicker at stopping him when he wanted a new leased car. Mr. Messer eventually had to return the fancy new Lexus and have a more reasonable car during the last several

years. Now we hear that Jack Messer has rented a new car, and this time it's a \$40,000-plus Toyota Avalon luxury car.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister said yesterday in this House that Mr. Messer had to go to the board, and they sure were successful at stopping this waste of money. Not only were they too slow on the mark the first time, but they didn't remember that first lesson. As a consequence, taxpayers and power consumers will be catching the bus or driving beaten-up cars, confident in the fact that they are helping pay for Jack Messer's car while they can hardly afford their tax and power bills.

Mr. Speaker, those same taxpayers, I believe, hardly want to see Jack Messer given more authority to spend money as it's being proposed here in The Power Corporation Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Messer's use of taxpayers' dollars or his management of taxpayers' assets is questionable in yet other ways. During the restructuring period when many unionized employees and contractors faced lay-offs, we discovered that Jack Messer and his other NDP faithful, Carole Bryant, both received healthy raises.

Mr. Speaker, now we can count on Jack Messer to use these powers responsibly when during a time of downsizing and restructuring and closure of rural offices, he gets a raise for himself. What he should have done is shown some leadership and scaled back on his own salary and perks. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Messer is probably earning in excess of 10 times the average per capita income in this province, and that, Mr. Speaker, is offensive to many taxpayers.

While Jack Messer received his raise, Mr. Speaker, others lost out badly. In my constituency, we lost at least one Power office. But more importantly, we also lost the rural underground distribution program. This program provided safe power to farm families all across the province. And as a replacement to burying overhead power lines, SaskPower is sending out stickers and letters reminding people to beware of power lines. That's hardly a replacement. With the loss of this program went many jobs that provided income to rural contractors and to rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister say the boards will ensure good decisions are made with additional powers and keep an eye on Mr. Messer when such poor decisions are being made with more limited powers they already have . . . with the more limited powers. Mr. Speaker, this Bill will give SaskPower more powers without providing us with more tools to help us fulfil our role of holding the government and SaskPower responsible for their actions. I've said before that this is a matter of great concern.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why this is a matter of great concern involves reporting. SaskPower will now only be constrained by its board as to how it spends our money. If there is no limit on transactions, then at least it is important that some information on these is reported to the Assembly and the public.

Mr. Speaker, the government and Jack Messer have already shown a great deal of disregard for reporting information to the

public. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, at least some five subsidiaries of SaskPower do not provide the Assembly with financial statements. This is the most basic tool of accountability, and without it, we as an opposition are put in a difficult position. Without such basic information, we cannot defend the interests of the taxpayers in this province.

There are other types of information that should be reported. For example, Mr. Speaker, while Jack Messer has a penchant for expensive things and salary increases, he also has a penchant for hiring consultants. We discovered last year that SaskPower hired a consulting firm called Towers Perrin to help them in the restructuring process by analysing the corporation. The consulting contract was reportedly valued at \$10 million. Despite the efforts of the media to find out how much the contract was worth and who received subcontracts, none of this information was ever released to the public.

This information may also include studies that could prove useful for the new Crown corporations review that the minister responsible for CIC is undertaking with the public. I think that some of the information should be released, provided it doesn't reveal technical secrets of the corporation.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower and this government have not given us anything at all. We have no idea how much this will cost or . . . how much it cost or who received the money. I believe we deserve to know these things. If this government wants free rein to let SaskPower management spend our money however they wish, we at least deserve more thorough reporting from this government as to how our money is risked and spent.

Mr. Speaker, there are other examples of where bringing SaskPower on par with Crowns like SaskTel would be a mistake. Last year, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, SaskTel had bought several cable franchises in the United Kingdom that involved obligations to the turn of the century of close to \$50 million. These were eventually sold.

Not only did SaskTel buy this, but it was reported in the British press as negotiating with a struggling telecommunications company to purchase British Rail . . . Telecom, which is a British Crown corporation. The cost of the deal ranged between 300 million and 600 million Canadian. Fortunately this never materialized as a larger British electronics firm was the successful bidder.

The details of what happened aside, Mr. Speaker, this example shows what could happen if this Bill is passed. SaskTel was able to do all of these things without the taxpayers knowing because it had the same powers which the government proposes to give SaskPower in this Bill. Imagine that our accountability system is so slack in this province that our Crown corporations can try to buy Crown corporations in other countries without so much as a word being said by the Crown or the government to the taxpayers. That is a shameful situation, Mr. Speaker. By giving SaskPower these additional powers, the members opposite just want to extend this problem rather than have it rectified.

I would suggest, as I have and will continue to do, that major transactions of the Crowns should be placed under greater control. The government should adopt more recommendations of the Gass Commission and ensure this House has more pre-action controls; have the government issue a government-wide, comprehensive budget, and follow it up at the end of the year with a report as the auditor suggested.

Mr. Speaker, I would also suggest that the minister responsible for this Bill quickly refer to the auditor's last report on CIC. He suggests that Crowns and boards of Crowns are not communicating properly. More importantly, a number of them are not providing the government with the information it needs to make proper management decisions and even control the projects.

Not only do we in the opposition not have an adequate accountability controls, but this government has inadequate management controls. And that is scary, and it should be dealt with before the Bill is passed.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, if this government wants to give us a sign that these powers will be used responsibly then I would say, start hiring Crown corporation CEOs that are professional managers rather than professional politicians.

I'll now take my place, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to questioning the minister on this Bill in committee.

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to briefly talk about this SaskPower Bill. But I guess I want to address the member from Thunder Creek's comments. He's talking about the Crowns and the inability of the opposition to get basic answers from SaskTel.

As a member of the Crown Corporations Committee that met yesterday morning dealing with . . . I said SaskTel; I meant SaskPower, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday morning Crown Corporations Committee met from 9 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock in the morning. Jack Messer was there, the minister responsible was there. The opposition were there and were asking some questions. Not one question asked was refused to be answered; answers were provided for every question asked.

I don't know where this accountability or lack of accountability comes from. Look at the Provincial Auditor's report. We've got . . . SaskPower has a clean auditor's report. Now where is the nonsense about inadequate management control, the innuendo, going after a chief executive officer who cannot stand in this legislature and defend himself. I think that is just unconscionable action.

I think that what we see, the irresponsibility of the Liberal opposition, particularly the member from Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker, is simply yet more of the same. What the member for Thunder Creek did with respect to Crown Life, he's now trying to do with SaskPower Corporation.

This Bill is eminently reasonable. It brings SaskPower into a more reasonable operating position vis-a-vis other power corps,

brings us up to 1996, Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to run the corporation, the government, the operations of the people, into the next century. I will be delighted to take my place when the time comes, standing, if that's what's required, voting in support of this legislation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's appropriate that we pair this Bill up with Bill No. 38, since they both amend The Power Corporation Act. I find it more than a little curious that this particular amendment was not included in the first Bill. I don't mean to be suspicious, Mr. Speaker, but this government seems to have underhanded motives for so many of its decisions. Was there a reason that they chose to separate the two?

In any case, this Bill seems to be as unfair to taxpayers as Bill No. 38. Let me qualify this. Bill No. 87 may possibly be even worse because it not only gives SaskPower more power, it gives SaskPower more freedom to spend taxpayers' money. What kind of a government would agree to do this?

Mr. Speaker, in an article in the *Leader-Post* the Energy minister was quoted as saying: "Deregulation and removal of trade barriers means swapping, selling, buying power." He said that in some cases it could prevent SaskPower from entering into some of these arrangements that can then generate net profits for the corporation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how very thoughtful of this government. They are so worried about missing out on a chance to make money for the grateful taxpayers of this province that they are willing to introduce legislation that gives them more control over our money. What kind of twisted logic is this?

Mr. Speaker, in that same article the Energy minister said he does not believe there will be less public accountability if this Bill is passed. Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there will be less accountability to the public, and I also believe that the government is fully aware of this.

What they are proposing is to let SaskPower pass by the current rule that requires them to go through orders in council to receive approval for expenditures. The public can access these orders in council shortly after the government has made a decision. If SaskPower is allowed to bypass this stage, when will the public get a chance to hear about these expenditures? I'm sorry, but annual reports and freedom of information Acts do not hold the same level of public accountability as orders in council.

This way too, if SaskPower makes a poor choice, the government can wash their hands of the situation. They can look to the taxpayers and whine that they didn't know about these expenditures and can point the finger at someone else. We all know this is an art form that they have perfected. If it's not the feds or the former Tory administration, it might as well be anyone else but the cabinet.

Why should the taxpayers trust that SaskPower will not make

bad decisions with public money? Well I would like to think that the SaskPower executive is filled with honest, hard-working people and this would never be a problem. At the same time though, the president is quite clearly a political patronage appointment from the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, if this Bill gets passed, will the government take responsibility for the choices made at the Crown corporation level? Because the taxpayers will want to hold someone accountable, and when it deals specifically with their tax dollars, they have every right to expect accountability from this government.

Mr. Speaker, people are growing more and more sceptical about government spending. Every time this government hides their spending behind a piece of legislation, they are digging the hole a little bit deeper. Governing should not be about secrets and hidden choices; it should be about open, accountable decisions that are in the best interests of the public. And I don't believe that the changes outlined in this Bill are in the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the government is solving this problem the wrong way. The government says that the current process for funding approval doesn't work because sometimes it takes the cabinet two or three weeks to sign the order in council.

Mr. Speaker, if it takes two or three weeks to sign an order, something is wrong. Either the cabinet needs more time to look at the proposal before making a recommendation, which could be a positive thing for taxpayers, or they are too disorganized to make a decision. If that's the case, maybe the procedure in cabinet needs to be refined.

What is not acceptable is the solution proposed by the government in this Bill. Mr. Speaker, it is our job as opposition to hold this government accountable for its bad decisions, but it has also become obvious that we have to speak for the people of this province. The government has long since stopped considering that to be a part of their job. They will speak up for Crown corporation presidents or for their own self-interests, but they have no interest in speaking up for the very people who elected them to office.

Mr. Speaker, for such a short, straightforward piece of legislation, this Bill is highly controversial. We have many questions for this government and we very much look forward to their answer in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Mr. Koenker: — Yes, I just want to make a few brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, because I'm very deeply offended by the remarks that we've just heard from the opposition parties. And I consider them less than forthright and less than frank in their appraisal of what this legislation is all about.

And I want to say, when the member from Humboldt talks about the public having every right to expect accountability and to say that the government is hiding expenditures behind this legislation, that that is not in fact what is happening at all with this legislation. It's an easy punch to throw in this legislative Chamber to say that, but it simply is not true.

As was mentioned by my colleague from Regina just a few moments ago, earlier this week in the Public Accounts Committee of the Government of Saskatchewan, Tuesday morning, the auditor's report was given for SaskPower Corporation, and it indicated that it was entirely in keeping with all of the expectations that the auditors had in their examination. There was nothing hidden; there was nothing done that was inappropriate. In fact they actually commended SaskPower for putting some of their projections and their expectations in terms of their operations for the future into the annual report.

And so to indulge in a smear campaign and a campaign of innuendo and insinuation about the frankness and the forthcomingness and the honesty of this government is less than acceptable in this House, and it does not behove responsible opposition to engage in such tactics. And I want it said on the record that the opposition's remarks are not an accurate reflection of what this legislation is all about at all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

(1130)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

The Chair: — Will the minister introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. My officials today are the same as when the Bill was last being considered by the committee: Lily Stonehouse, the assistant deputy minister; and Melodie Olineck, the department's liaison with SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology).

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

It seems like a long time since April 24; I think it's been a year, but it was only a month and a bit. We were discussing a number of issues the last opportunity, Mr. Minister, around the board members that make up the SIAST board. And there are a couple of things that have come to mind since your comments of that day.

The question I would ask is if you could give me an explanation around what is the selection criteria for members of the board. I know I asked you the question previously around whether you're posting them or whether you indeed advertise that there is a position open. But what I would like to find out from you is the specific criteria if I was to inquire of your department whether or not I would be eligible to be a member of the SIAST board.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The hon. member, Mr. Chair, would probably not be acceptable because he's a sitting member of this legislature. So I hate to disappoint him like that, but he's not on the list. But almost everybody else is, if they have something to offer to the board.

We look at the geography of Saskatchewan and we try and get a fair representation from around the province. We try to achieve some sort of gender balance. We try to ensure that aboriginal people are represented. We look for people who have an interest in the subject of training and have a background that would equip them to come to the work of the board with an area of expertise or an area of interest which would enable them to participate constructively in the work of the board.

These are not criteria that are written down anywhere. But as I told the member the other day, we are considering fresh appointments to the board, and these are the things that are on my mind and on the minds of my senior advisers as we consider who could be considered for appointment, who would indeed make a positive contribution to the work of the board.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You indicated that you try to take into account gender, and I'm wondering in terms of the current make-up, what are the number of males, females.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm advised that at the moment five out of the twelve board members are women.

Mr. Krawetz: — Another question around the members that make up the board. Currently, are there any people that represent the disabled or another visible minority other than, as you've indicated, that you strive for aboriginal representation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer to both those questions is no, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. What criteria is in place for the selection of the chairperson of the board? Does the board select from within, or does the minister and the department have control of that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The Act requires that the minister appoint the Chair. And coincidentally, we are in the process of trying to select a Chair now. Again there's no formal criteria. But my disposition is to make an appointment from existing board members.

My predisposition is to appoint from existing board members for the reason, which I consider to be a compelling reason, that they're familiar with the work of the board. They're not someone brand-new who would have to go through quite a period of orientation to be able to do that job. I've been examining the suitability, the background, of the existing board, with a view to appointing a Chair from that complement.

Mr. Krawetz: — You indicated last day that the number of terms that a person may serve on the board I believe was two, and they were each three years in length. Is it common, Mr. Minister, for a person to have served two terms and to be off the board for awhile . . . are they then eligible once again to be

a member of the board?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's a very interesting question, Mr. Chair. And it's one that has been on my mind because there are, in our province, a number of people who have served two terms on the board and who have been off the board now, and that very question of their eligibility for reappointment has been on my mind.

I have taken advice on the question. And my advice is that after a person has served the two terms and has therefore resigned from the board, that person would in fact be eligible for reappointment in the future. Now we're always most comfortable in these situations if we have some precedent to point to in . . . reappoint in these circumstances, in circumstances like this. And again my advice is that there are no precedents. In other words, there is no one in the province who, having served two terms on the board and therefore not being eligible for reappointment, has in fact been reappointed after a period off the board.

That's not to say that it won't happen in the future, because under both the old Act and the new Act it's quite permissible for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint someone who had been resigned from the board or removed from the board because they had served the two terms.

So I can say to the member that I'm not contemplating appointing someone who had previously served two terms, but there would be nothing preventing me from doing that if I chose.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for that answer. I appreciate the final comments.

Mr. Minister, you've indicated the selection of the chairperson is usually from within, and I think that that's an excellent idea, to have some continuity there.

Is there a vice-chairperson, and is the same procedure followed by yourself?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Again the appointments are made by the . . . they're both made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council — both the Chair and the Vice-Chair — and there has in fact in the past been both.

We are in a situation now where the previous Chair has resigned and where the Vice-Chair has been the Acting Chair. And in the appointments that will be made, just probably while this legislature is still sitting, an order in council will be passed that will designate a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, last day we were discussing the rate of remuneration for board members, and I think you indicated that was around \$155. My question is that with the advent of conference calls — I'm sure that the members of the board of directors probably will undertake such calls — my question then would be, is, if they do undertake a conference call and they spend a significant amount of time, and I don't know what that would be in terms

of time commitment, but if it's a great portion of the day — two or three hours — is that considered a meeting? And would there be remuneration for that meeting then?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Our understanding of the situation is as follows. I mention two points. First of all, there are a fairly large number of such calls; and secondly, the members of the board don't put in a bill for them, so they're not paid for them.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Could you explain the role that the executive committee has within the framework of the administration?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, the board meets once a month as a rule, except not in the summer. So normal schedule of meetings would be 10 per year. They have an executive committee that has a number of responsibilities, and I think I can fairly describe them in the following terms.

The executive committee will ensure the execution of board decisions and board policies to the extent that that's necessary in between board meetings; that their name would suggest that — they are the executive committee — they will deal with any decisions that have to be made between board meetings that doesn't require the convening of the whole board. And they will perform a similar function over the summer months when the board has no sitting scheduled.

Now it's a very difficult decision to answer because in all organizations these executive committees perform a somewhat different role. And I haven't been on the inside of the operation of the SIAST board to know just exactly how this committee functions, but my answer is based upon what I do know about the operation of the SIAST board and my knowledge of organizations generally.

I think this would, to summarize, not be unlike executive committees in other organizations that have an executive committee of their board of directors.

(1145)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll group a number of questions together and allow you to respond to them, and it's around the executive committee. My question would be — in light of your answer — questions would be, how many people comprise that executive committee?

I assume that they are all chosen from the board of directors. And my question would be, is the appointment of a person to the executive committee your responsibility or is it chosen from within the committee? In other words, is it similar to the selection of the chairperson?

And then the last point around the executive committee would be, when that committee meets to do the business in between meetings, or in the summer as you indicated, are they then also eligible for additional remuneration beyond the 10 meetings that they would be attending with the entire board present?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I think

that I'm able to give accurate information on this but I put a caveat on, that we're not absolutely certain.

We believe that the number of people on the executive committee is four. It consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, and two other members who are selected by the board itself from among its number. So they are in fact all board members, and they are paid for their work as members of the executive committee on the same basis as if they were going to a meeting of the board of directors itself.

Mr. Krawetz: — If you would have the statistics from last year, for instance, what would be the number of times that that executive committee would have met in a 12-month period, more or less?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I'm sorry that I don't have that information. We don't have it in our briefing material. I can however, and I do undertake to the member that we will, inquire and find out, say, for the last fiscal year how many times the executive committee met, as the member has referred to in his question.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that commitment. When the executive committee meets and is conducting business, you've indicated that it is to carry the board between full meetings. What powers does this executive committee have? What has been granted to this committee by the board? Is it allowed to spend monies? Is it allowed to make decisions? What would be its mandate?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As I indicated to the member, Mr. Chair, in a previous answer, I am not an insider so far as the operation of that board is concerned, so I don't know precisely how it operates compared to other organizations. The member himself has been a member of a very large organization and will have some experience with executive committees.

The Act is helpful to this extent; the Act says that "The executive committee may exercise any powers of the board that are delegated to it by resolution of the board . . ."

And that's as far as I can go with the answer. I do not personally know what sorts of delegations have been made by resolution of the board. If the member wants to, I'm quite happy to obtain that information and send it to him. But as I stand here today, I'm not able to give any further information.

Mr. Krawetz: — No, that would be fine, Mr. Minister. What I'll look at is the clause that you've indicated that indicates the resolution is part of the board's commitment.

As most committees operating or as most board operate, they create additional committees to allow for special committees to take care of specific functions. How many such committees exist within the framework of SIAST, and what would these committees . . . what would be their tasks?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We know that the board has an audit committee, and it's our understanding that the board from time to time creates ad hoc committees in respect of a particular

matter that is before it. So far as we know however, the audit committee and the executive committee would be the only standing committees of the board. It may be that there are more, but we're not aware of that today.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. The amendments that are proposed indicates that the, I think it's referred to as the secretariat, would be the coordinating unit I think now of all four campuses. Because it's now mentioned in the Act as the secretariat, has its role changed when it existed as part of The Institute Act, or is the secretariat's function still basically the same as it was other than now that it's described in the amendments?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There is to be no change in the function of the secretariat.

Mr. Krawetz: — This is a financial question and maybe it would be better under estimates, but in terms of management, in terms of the secretariat itself, what monies are expended to run the secretariat?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, it's a difficult question to answer because the secretariat's budget includes major expenditures that are not related to the secretariat. If the member were to look at the department's budget — or at least the SIAST budget — you would find that the secretariat carries the cost for the rental of all of the facilities that SIAST occupies in respect of all of its campuses, or institutes as they're called under the new Act.

And they also carry a lot . . . I think all of the salary costs. At least they have a very large salary element that is . . . that pertains to the whole of the institution, and not simply the secretariat. And in addition, they have a . . . they carry the budget for technology — I'm struggling for the right word here — the equipment and the information technology of SIAST.

Looking at their budget, there is a . . . the total budget for the secretariat is \$21 million out of a total of \$109 million budget for SIAST itself. But of that 21 million, 14 million is included as payments to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), and those would be for the most part the facility costs. And salaries and benefits are over 3 million, and services are over 2 million. And that indicates of course that they're carrying expenditures in the secretariat budget that are for larger issues than merely the operation of the secretariat itself.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would you be able to provide a copy of that breakdown for me? Okay, thanks.

Next area that I'd like to touch on briefly, Mr. Minister, is around the chief executive officer of SIAST. What is the criteria that is used for the appointment — and I know that you have not too recently appointed a new chief executive officer — what process was followed to secure that person?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, the current chief executive is Art Knight. And the appointment of the chief executive officer is a major function of the board of directors. The appointment is made by the board.

In the case of Mr. Knight, I think Mr. Knight's appointment is a very good example of how the process works. The board struck a committee which included members of the board, some members of the board itself, as well as representatives of each of the four campuses or institutes of SIAST. They advertised extensively. They received applications. They reviewed applications and short listed and interviewed quite a number of — it is our understanding anyway — quite a number of potential candidates, and then made their selection. And it was a function of, in the final analysis, a function of the board of directors.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Would you be able to provide us the range at which the chief executive officer is paid, the salary range for payment?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I might mention before I answer the member's question that Dan Perrins, the deputy minister of the department, has joined us.

We're not certain what salary is paid to Mr. Knight. We do know that it was negotiated between the board and Mr. Knight and that it is a salary. It is not a range. It is for a specific amount.

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

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Seated in the east gallery, I noticed a young man just arrive here not too long ago, Mr. Gille Labarge. The Assembly would be interested to know he's an enthusiastic, hard-working SIAST student, so he's arrived at a rather opportune time as we're looking at Bill No. 3 here, the Act respecting SIAST.

He's also . . . I don't have to say, because of his presence here, he has a keen interest in politics as well. And I know him to be a hard-working volunteer on campaigns in the past. I know the member from Wood River has appreciated his assistance in that regard. So I would just ask everybody here today just to join in acknowledging him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 3 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. In the area of collective bargaining, Mr. Minister, when you refer to units, what would constitute appropriate units for the purpose

of collective bargaining?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are two bargaining units that we find at SIAST, both of which have been defined by the Labour Relations Board as the law prescribes. Speaking generally, one of the units is for faculty and the other is for administration, or employees involved in the administration of the institutes.

Mr. Krawetz: — A further question regarding collective bargaining, Mr. Minister. What positions are not considered as employees within the purposes of bargaining at SIAST? Are there employees there that are out of scope that are not considered part of the collective bargaining units that you just described?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The bargaining units were defined in the old Act in section 14. They are not defined in the new Act. They can be dealt with at the collective bargaining table, or they can be dealt with by the Labour Relations Board.

The old Act — that is, the Act that's presently in existence as we discuss the new Bill today — describes one unit as the academic staff members, and the second as all employees of the institute other than academic staff members.

Now the exemptions, the out-of-scope people, are the president or the chief executive officer, the vice-president, the executive director, principal, assistant principal, dean, registrar, controller, auditor, director of human resources, director of computer systems, the treasurer, and the senior policy adviser. Now that was the management group under the old Act. So that's how it's been.

Those exemptions were spelled out in subsection (7) of section 14 of the old Act. So I believe I'm correct, as I stand here, that those are the people who are out of scope at SIAST now.

Mr. Krawetz: — If you could clarify for me, Mr. Minister, I'd like to refer to the amendment, Bill No. 3, clause 34, parts (b) and (c). When section (b) or clause (b) refers to . . . it indicates that:

the Public Service Commission . . . may transfer any employees in the public service within the meaning of The Public Service Act to and cause them to become employees of SIAST . . .

Could you indicate what that clause is actually stating?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Those sections or those clauses are not considered to serve any particular purpose now but were put into the Act in 1987 when SIAST was set up as a institute separate from the department. The member will know that prior to that SIAST was, for all intents and purposes, part of the department. And when they were set up as a separate entity, then the people who were employed there had to be transferred from the status of being employees of government to become employees of SIAST. And so clause (b) was put in that Act so that the Public Service Commission could move the people over, transfer them, and cause them to become employees of SIAST.

We haven't taken those sections out, but they will serve no purpose that we can think of after this Act is passed.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, and to your staff, I appreciate your answers, both in April and today.

I would suggest, in our discussions around the actual clauses of the Bill, that when I read clause no. 32, you pointed that out before, and I note that you have not proposed that House amendment regarding that clause. And I think it's quite ambiguous the way it reads.

And I look at the preposition "it" as it is used in clause no. 32, and I believe that that "it" has reference, as you indicated before, to of course the Lieutenant Governor in Council. It is a person; it is not an it. And I would suggest that our caucus would have no problem with the House amendment that would correct clause 32 to read . . . by replacing that word. And I know you had suggested that might be a possibility, but you have not indicated that today.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think that we won't amendment. I think the meaning of section 32 is clear. We had proposed an amendment to another section, and we tacked on this amendment. But we don't have a separate one prepared to file with the Clerk and to handle in the way that the rules of this place requires, so we're content with section 32 as it is even though it is subject to the criticism that the hon. member raises.

Mr. Krawetz: — We'll leave it at that, Mr. Minister, and again, thank you for your comments regarding the help you've provided.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 35 inclusive agreed to.

The Chair: — I invite the minister to move that we report the Bill without amendment.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before doing that I would like to thank my officials for the help that they've given me today, and they have been a considerable help, as well as for the previous time the committee considered this Bill in April. And I thank them for their excellent help, which is something that I've come to expect from them.

I would like, Mr. Chair, to move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Chair: — Minister, I'll invite you to introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, with me today is assistant deputy minister, Terry Scott, and the manager of livestock operations,

Merv Ross.

Clause 1

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and your officials today, and I look forward to some progressive dialogue with Bill No. 48.

I would first of all say about the Bill that there are some positive changes as a result of the amendments; but also once again there are some problems created through the regulations.

If we could, Mr. Minister, I'd just like to briefly ask you a question — if there was anything in particular that prompted the amendments to this Act and in particular the amendments that are brought forward here today.

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — One of the main things that we tried to accomplish and are trying to accomplish, which is something that it's not always easy to do, but that is to eliminate paper flow. You as a farmer and I as a farmer know how much paper can drive you crazy. And this is just a step to . . . one of the big things it does, it just cuts the paper flow down.

With lifetime brands, you don't have to renew every four years, cuts administration down. And also we've got supporting letters from the industry: livestock growers, cattle feeders, and the . . . (inaudible) . . . So the industry has been requesting.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Minister. Could you share those letters with us as well?

Just regarding then . . . And I guess I agree with you that any time we can cut paper down, which inevitably leads to less bureaucracy, that's what we want to try and do, and to see that we have a system that works on track, but it is also fair.

The question I might have for you, Mr. Minister, would be . . . when you talk about a delegate or a director, and it talks in the subsection about "designated by the minister," of course done through regulations . . . which also begs the question then. When the director has the ability to delegate his authorities down to someone else, I'm wondering if that's an advisable option for the director himself to have.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I think it is advisable because there can be situations where the director may not be around in order to carry out his duties. He gets sick or . . . I mean there are a number of reasons. And in cases where there is a need to act quickly, then by a simple phone call, a director could delegate someone else to fulfil his role. So I don't think there is any possibility of abusing power here; it's just a matter of making sure that if, in an emergency situation, if it comes up, then somebody else can fulfil the role of the director.

Mr. McLane: — Now the director will be appointed by the minister. Can you tell me then what background, what type of qualifications that that person would have to have in order for you to appoint him.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the person would have to have a knowledge of the industry — of course that would be number one — and also an ability to administer the regulations and to have a working knowledge of the legislation, so somebody that knows the industry plus is a good administrator.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Minister. That would seem most appropriate. However when the director himself can delegate his authorities down, is there any parameters as to whom that person can delegate his authorities to?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The same would apply. We have people who work with the director, you know, on a daily basis who know the industry and who also have a knowledge of the Act and the regulations and how to administer them. So if there was a situation . . . and let me just say this, that I think it would be very rare, on a rare occasion that the director would actually have to delegate. But the same would apply that he'd have to have a knowledge . . . the person would have a knowledge of the industry and of the Act and the regulations and how to administer them.

Mr. McLane: — Is there anything in the regulations that lays out the qualifications that you would use for a guideline to appoint that director?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — No, there's nothing in the regulations that spells out how to appoint the director. But the appointments are . . . I mean the ministers in many parts of government appoint many people and often the deputy minister acts on behalf of the minister. So nothing in the Act but . . . I mean in order to have the office carried out in a manner that it was helpful to the industry, obviously you want to put somebody there, and the criteria would be that the minister would appoint somebody who's knowledgeable.

Mr. McLane: — Sorry, Mr. Minister, I didn't quite hear the first part of your question with the discussion that was coming from your whip there. Did I hear you say that there was nothing in the regulations that lays out any guidelines for who you would pick to be a director?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — That is correct.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, so if there is no . . . Do you not think it would be appropriate then that there would be some guidelines laid out in the Act itself as to who would have the qualifications to be a director?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — No, I don't think that's necessary. And I will send across with the page the letters to the association and . . . that's what you asked for earlier, letters that show of support for the Act.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move we report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

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

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 48.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Intergovernmental Affairs Vote 30

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — All of these people have been introduced before, but allow me to refresh our memories. To my right is the deputy minister, Greg Marchildon. To my left, and occupying the chair normally occupied by the Premier, is Paul Osborne, executive director of intergovernmental relations. Behind me is Melinda Gorrill, director of administration. Lynn Oliver — whom I'm not 100 per cent certain was here the last time — Lynn Oliver sits behind Mr. Osborne. She's the senior adviser, information technology and telecommunications.

(1230)

Item 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to your officials, Mr. Minister. The last time we were up, the other member asked for a package of information. I was wondering if that package was completed.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It's not entirely done. Two or three of the questions they are still searching for information on. It's one of the problems . . . I'll say this in passing; it is not in any sense a criticism of how work is done or how you do your work. But the package of questions does take quite awhile. And one of the limitations of the system is that since it's all got to be done before you get any of it, one of the difficulties with this system is you tend to wait quite awhile for any of the information.

One of the options would be perhaps to give us these packages well in advance of the session next time. It takes weeks to do this, and these folks who are here assisting me today have spent a lot of time on it. One or two of the questions do take a lot of time, and that's one of the problems of this system . . . is that all information travels at the speed of the slowest question, and a couple of them are pretty slow. We have been earnestly trying to get these. I was trying to get these ready for the return date. I say it's 90 per cent ready, but there are one or two questions are dragging on. It's just one of the limitations of this system.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We do appreciate that it takes a lot of effort to get it together.

I'm going to be just looking at some of the questions I asked

last time, and I have a question. When you talked about the French language coordination and a suggestion that you had made that actually the federal government paid for some of that. Could you let me know how much money that was?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — During the upcoming budget year, the budget year we're in now, the total amount is 180,647. I'm sorry; that's the total amount spent in this area. The total amount spent is 180,647. The total federal contributions are \$177,147. So total federal contributions cover all but 2 or 3 percentage of the expenditures.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Also I understand that the federal government provided funds for the secretary and translation services for ministers' conferences and when premiers or ministers met.

You said that it would be \$46,000 this year. How much was it last year?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The budgeted amount in 1995-6 was 47,000. We actually only paid 39,100. The budgeted amount for this year is 46,000.

I just add for the benefit of the member that these are partially translation services but not entirely. The secretariat also makes all the arrangements. They get the rooms. They get them ready. They get all the stuff: the water and the glasses and all that stuff . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And microphones, right. And all that kind of thing. So it's partially translation, but only partially. It's also just the general arrangements.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Another one of the questions that was asked was the trips that were taken by various departments, and I'm wondering if a department . . . Like the trip that was taken by the Minister of Economic Development to Nicaragua. Is that paid for by the Department of Economic Development or your department?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No. The travel of each minister is covered by his or her department. We don't cover that. No.

Ms. Draude: — We'd asked for a list of the trips that were taken last year, and I was wondering if you'd had the opportunity to compile that list.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I was going to hand this to you actually. I think this was also part of your package, but I don't see why we wouldn't give it to you. Oh yes, your question, strictly speaking, was mine. During part of this period, this portfolio was ably . . . the responsibilities were ably discharged by my colleague who in fact is here in the House today. And I will table the details of his travel as well.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'd also discussed about some work that was done by, I think it was the Executive Council, and you had indicated that they were trying to organize, prepare, and think their way through the response to the Quebec issue. And I'm wondering if some of this work was done for the Premier's recent trip to Quebec.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, as I think members understand, Executive Council is, as I think I said before, Executive Council does not have expertise in each of the areas. Thus if the Premier needs something in education, he would go to the department of . . . his staff would go to the Department of Education. Likewise we provided background material on the Quebec trip.

Ms. Draude: — In our first round of estimates, you had said that the department had doubled its number of employees since 1992. Can you tell me what accounts for this increase?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The increase in what this department is responsible for. The government as a whole is not doing more things, but more things have been transferred from other departments to this one, and thus this department has assumed responsibilities which have been transferred from other departments. And this process continues on.

The nature of the times in which we find ourselves mean that our intergovernmental contacts, our intergovernmental problems, and our intergovernmental opportunities simply grow in number. And thus things like . . . indeed, things like intergovernmental relations and constitutional relations, these were not in this department back in 1991. Now they are a major source of time and effort.

Ms. Draude: — Some of the increased staff that you have at this time probably came over from other departments, then. Am I correct?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, that's correct. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Your department was once called the provincial secretariat. Can you explain why it was changed?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It no longer really . . . Provincial Secretary has not described really the work of the department for decades. If you look at the pictures on the first floor, of early cabinets, from the very beginning one of them was Provincial Secretary. In fact the person sat in cabinet meetings, made notes, and he — it was always a "he" in those days — he was responsible for keeping notes of cabinet meetings. He was the secretariat. That responsibility hasn't been discharged for decades, and the name does not describe the functions any more.

And thus all other governments described the duties now as Intergovernmental Affairs; it's the name used everywhere else. It describes our relations with other governments. So Provincial Secretary simply no longer describes the work that's done by either the minister, whoever the occupant is, nor by the department.

Ms. Draude: — Was it a large cost to make this change?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, the change was nil. We did not throw away any paper, letterhead, cards, or anything else. I say, I think it's true that the cards which I've got in my pocket, I do believe still say Minister of Intergovernmental Relations and Provincial Secretary — and they do — and I will continue to

use them until they're gone.

Ms. Draude: — Do you see a change in the size or scope of the department over the next three years?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It is very difficult to . . . that's very difficult to predict. My view is that the process may well continue. My view is that it probably will continue and that as things continue to proceed with the whole question of Canadian unity, my guess is that this department will continue. Considerable demands will be placed on this department to meet those challenges.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Our province recently hosted a delegation from China. Do you have the total costs of this visit to the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They will hand that to me in a moment. Let me say the cost was really minimal because they were in and out in one day. They came in about 10 o'clock in the morning and were gone at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

There is a long-standing protocol when you receive foreign visitors that goes back centuries actually, and that is the host country is responsible for the food and lodging, for the arrangements — that's a protocol which goes back many centuries. And the only reason this isn't much higher was because they were only here for a few hours. Yes, I think the member is referring to the visit by Qiao Shi, and the total cost was \$4,329 which included gifts, a luncheon, photography, and some translation.

Ms. Draude: — As Intergovernmental Affairs minister, your department probably has the most contact with other government departments and agencies. Is your ministry then helping to coordinate the downsizing of the provincial civil service?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, that's really beyond the scope of our department. That is handled as much by Executive Council as anyone. It's everybody's responsibility, but we really are not involved in the process of downsizing. In many ways that's handled by Finance.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, did you say that these were new cards or still had the . . .

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, new cards.

Mr. McLane: — Pardon me?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, new cards.

Mr. McLane: — These were the new cards?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — These are the new cards.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I should perhaps explain that they have the title, Intergovernmental Relations. The name of the

department is now Intergovernmental Affairs. I was, prior to a month ago, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations and Provincial Secretary. Since no one ever knew what the Provincial Secretary did, I just left it off the card, then used the title Intergovernmental Relations. It no longer is the name. The name is Intergovernmental Affairs but I'm going to continue to use these cards until they're gone, even though the name is not correct.

Ms. Draude: — So they were changed from when you were called provincial secretariat though?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, I never put Provincial Secretary on. I never was able to satisfactorily explain to anyone why and where the name Provincial Secretary came from. They had the notion I sat in cabinet and made notes of meetings, and it just was such a nuisance explaining it that I left it off the card. It never was on any card that I ever gave out.

Ms. Draude: — How many contracted employees does your department employ and at what expenditures?

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There is one currently working. His name is Kent Smith and he is acting as head of the information technology and transfer.

Ms. Draude: — How many of these are long-term contracts, say over a year, versus short-term contracts?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, none of them are long-term contracts. That style of employing people is no longer utilized by this government. There may be some left around but we, as a general rule, do not enter into long-term contracts of employment any longer.

Ms. Draude: — How many of the jobs or contract offerings are publicly tendered?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well there is only one. We only have the one, and it was not publicly tendered. That was not the arrangement. He came to us from — and has done an excellent job, as a matter of interest — he came to us from SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations). I think that was his background — came here, had a background in information technology and transfer, and is still here. I should add that he's on a month-to-month contract, so it wouldn't really be appropriate to tender it.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, last time the estimates were up, the protocol office budget was discussed and it indicated that the budget had fallen substantially this year because of the 90th anniversary celebrations that took place last year. How many people were actually hired to coordinate this celebration?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We don't actually have that information in writing, and if what I tell you turns out to be inaccurate, we will send you a letter which will correct the information.

To the best of . . . what I've got is a statement of how much we spent, not how many people were there. To the best of their memory, there were four people on full time in this office. I may add just very quickly that it was a bare bones operation. It was run in a very lean fashion. But there appears to have been four full time.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, have those people left the government's employ and how much was actually spent on the celebration?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Some have, some haven't. Some have left the government employ and some have not. Some have fitted into other positions which were vacant. The total expenditures here were . . . total budgeted was 1,077,600. The total spent was only 75 per cent of that; it was \$784,225.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When the Premier took his recent trip to Quebec, I'm wondering if the cost of his trip came out of your budget . . . of this department's budget.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Premier's . . . as I explained, the cost of each minister's travel is charged to his or her own department. There were two support staff which went with the Premier — the deputy minister who I introduced a little earlier, and another individual who I don't think is present today, Mr. Ian Peach, the constitutional adviser. They went with him and those costs were paid for out of this department.

Ms. Draude: — Under the information, technology and telecommunication section, Mr. Minister, can you tell me what actually the role of this department is, and its duties?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is an area which is growing very rapidly in importance. There has been a telecommunications section around for a very long time. The very first responsibility which I had when I was appointed as a minister in 1975, I was minister in charge of a telecommunications secretariat. The responsibility has been around for a long time, and it has advised us on telecommunications policy.

It has been the view of various governments, going back I think at least to the Ross Thatcher era in the '60s, that the government should have some advice on telecommunications separate and apart from the expertise of SaskTel. SaskTel is a player in the industry, and it has been felt by various governments that we should have advice which is independent of a company which has a major interest in it. And so we do.

This has just exploded in importance recently with the whole growth of Internet and what one might call the democratization of the telecommunications system; everybody can use it. It's like the streets in front of your house. Everybody uses it now.

And that has grown in importance. Generally its advice is to advise government on telecommunications, on information technology, also generally on computer and computer services. We try as well for instance to coordinate purchase of computer services. You've no doubt heard of the problem that the year 2000 is causing because computers do not recognize the change in the millennium. And this department is trying to coordinate

an overall government solution to this problem.

So generally telecommunications, information technology, and coordination of approaches to technical and computer related problems.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, wouldn't it cost the taxpayers of this province less money to have somebody that's actually in SaskTel working with your department on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes. There was one person seconded from SaskTel, has been here for a period of time, and I understand is going to be leaving the seconded position relatively shortly.

Ms. Draude: — Is SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) in any way connected to this office?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Certainly we work with SCN, but my colleague, the Minister of Education, is responsible for SCN.

Ms. Draude: — Under the international relations, Mr. Minister, the operating budget has increased by nearly seven times this year. Do we have that many more international relations issues as compared to last year?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Some of the additional money to which the member alluded is new money and I'll explain where that's going. A good part of it is additional money; it is money which has been taken from other departments.

The new money is mostly to do with the Ukraine. I just want to say in passing that we are fortunate to have a real comparative advantage. The Ukraine is an area of particular interest to Canada under the international allotments which have been made. This is an area of particular interest to Canada, in part because we have a large Ukrainian population. Some members of your caucus can relate to that. Saskatchewan enjoys a real comparative advantage in this market because of the background of the Premier. There are not many jurisdictions which have not only a Ukrainian Premier, but someone who speaks the language relatively fluently.

And when he was in the Ukraine very recently he was accorded the status of a head of state. And I'm told that the American ambassador phoned after he'd left and pointed out that the Premier of a relatively small province had been accorded the status of a head of state and wondered how he would get that for the governor of Colorado which was coming. The answer was, if he can speak Ukrainian fluently, we'll consider it.

So we do have a comparative advantage and we are making the most of it. And this money is in our budget to take advantage of that.

Secondly — and this is an old policy that goes back to the days of the Conservatives — we have an agreement with Jilin province in what used to be called Manchuria, and we are renewing that. And that's not new money; that's money which has come to us, this department, from other areas. But we're renegotiating that. Indeed I think we're signing an agreement,

an MOU (memorandum of understanding) on that. I think some time in the fall we'll be signing that.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I have a couple of questions around the translations of English to French on documents. You'll recall that I raised the issue around a particular pin that had been presented by myself to students from Quebec. And I did see a copy of your letter that you sent to Forestville, Quebec, in terms of indicating that that correction had been made.

My question would be, how can something like that occur within the department? Is it your responsibility, the responsibility of your department, Intergovernmental Affairs? Is it SPMC? Are the two connected, and will we be assured that something like that has little chance of occurring in the future?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, our department wasn't involved at all, except we were the poor rascals who had to tender the apology, because the pins were not handled by Intergovernmental Affairs but the resulting furore was.

What we're assured happened was it was a printing error. And it would appear that neither the printers nor those people at SPMC could at all read French. No one who printed the pins or who handled them had any idea of whether it was right or wrong. No one was actually fluent enough in the language to be able to tell. And so they now have a system for having someone who speaks the language read it over before they're handed out.

But it was just one of those systems which broke down, and I'm told there's a check in place now. Someone who can speak French reads it over before the darn things are handed out. It wasn't apparently the system; apparently they are all unilingual people who were handling it before.

Mr. Krawetz: — Supplement. Just an additional comment there, Mr. Minister. When we look at what has already occurred in terms of errors — and I know that there are a number of pins that were recognized that are in the hands, I'm sure, of MLAs within this House — and I note that the SPMC is not making any attempt to circulate new cards that probably the individual people can replace before passing them out.

And I'm wondering if you are concerned about that and whether you could encourage SPMC to indeed forward corrected cards to caucus offices to ensure that people who have those incorrect pins would indeed . . . or incorrect cards, would indeed replace them.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The pins, as I know the member knows, the pins are fine. It's the cards which are offensive.

The cards are relatively cheap to change. SPMC is attempting to make the changes, have contacted people whom they know have them. But you don't always know in whose hands these are because you may give them out and they go on to someone else. They are attempting to track them down and replace them with proper cards. I'm sure they will miss one or two.

But there are cards now which are printed properly. If any

member or anyone who happens to be listening to this has those cards, those offensive cards, by all means check. We'll check for nothing and make sure those are . . . they're correct, and if not correct, we'll give you the new cards.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, you'll probably be happy to know I just have a couple of questions left; perhaps just one, depending on the answer. I'm wondering if . . . I understand that you now have linguistic services now not only for French but also for Ukrainian. Is there any other languages that you are looking at at this time?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, we have Norwegian, Mandarin, and . . . We have at the university . . . Let me just say this in passing. Yes, there are French services, Ukrainian, Mandarin. And let me just say that we are fortunate in Regina to have really quite a good language centre at the university, one with a growing national reputation.

The Minister of Agriculture, who is now gone, and I will be, in a month's time or so, will be hosting a group from China, the name of which . . . it is the All China Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives. Their names, in difficulty, rival ours.

But it's a group which have a key importance. They are the group which distribute potash — key players in deciding whether it's Saskatchewan potash or Russian potash. And we are fortunate . . . and they want to have a session with the ministers on distribution of potash. And we are anxious obviously to accommodate them for reasons that are too obvious to need to be said.

We're very fortunate to be able to go to the university and call upon translation services. We can get from this university people who can simultaneously translate Mandarin to English and back again. And in fact we will be doing that.

We will be hosting a conference partially . . . which will be simultaneously translated so the Chinese people can follow it and so that it moves relatively quickly. We are very fortunate in this city to have the language centre at the university we do and the government makes considerable use of it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I'd like to thank all of your officials on behalf of the official opposition.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Xie Xie — I think that's how you say thank you in Mandarin — Xie Xie.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — While the Clerk and the chairman of the committees is finishing up, just let me thank the officials. In doing so, I want to thank all officials who helped us here today. This isn't seen by the public, and not many members see it, but the hallway's been full of officials all morning. These people have been waiting here, I think since about 11:30.

And I want to say this department is just desperate with work,

getting ready for one federal conference after another, and they will go back to the office and now spend another extra hour and a half on a Friday afternoon catching up with work they weren't able to do because they were here.

The officials make some very considerable sacrifices to aid and assist us, which isn't always seen. I want to, on behalf of the ministers and I think on behalf of all members of the House, I want to thank the officials for the time they put in here and for the sacrifices they make to assist us so that we might better discharge public duty.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Vote 30 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1995-96
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Intergovernmental Relations
Vote 30

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — It now being past the hour of 1 o'clock and just before adjourning the House, I want to wish to all members who are honeymooning this weekend, that their weekend will be filled with appropriate levels of romance. And to those members who may not be honeymooning this weekend, I hope too that you enjoy some romance, but a very pleasurable weekend and the long weekend in your constituencies and with your families for a happy Victoria Day long weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

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