

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is John Edwards, director in municipal policy and legislative services in the Department of Municipal Government; and behind me and behind John is Graham McNamee, the Chair of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And I think we may be joined later by another legislative officer from the department but is not here at the moment.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'd like to welcome your officials back today. We do not have a long line of questioning for you and your officials today, but we do have a few short questions.

Maybe you could start off this morning, could you just on Bill 45 just touch on the reasons for the changes to refresh all our memories from where we left off before?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in large part, just broadly, the Act is being amended or proposed to be amended in order to streamline the assessment appeal procedures.

So it changes the provisions for review by assessment appeal issues to the court. It changes the provisions respecting fees to be paid when appeals are filed or prior to appeals being heard. And generally the size of quorum for a board of revision to hear appeals and the number of members of the Municipal Board that are required to hear an appeal is changed. And basically it's meant to simplify and streamline the assessment appeal process provincially, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. As I said in my address on the second reading, I agree with the spirit of the amendments. However I'm concerned about section 3 which may shorten the publishing period too much. To avoid embarrassment to those who are possibly, for no fault of their own, late by a short period . . . I guess is what I'm saying, could you explain why a two or three month grace period wasn't maybe considered instead of where it is now, right dead on January 1?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I was wondering why the question doesn't seem to relate to the section of the Act the member opposite is referring to. And I wonder . . . We're dealing with The Municipal Board Act and the question being raised seems to apply to section no. 3 of The Tax Enforcement Act.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Madam Minister, and welcome to your officials. I have a couple

of questions as we go along here, Madam Minister, so I just want to jump in at this point because you're still fresh on this part of the subject matter. And then I'm sure that the members of the opposition will want to go back at some other areas.

But in the simplification of the assessment process — I like simplicity and I think everybody does — but there's always an inherent danger in simplifying matters of law and principles of law and the process of achieving fairness. What worries me is that while we're building in this simplicity of the process, are we perhaps short-circuiting the ability for people to receive justice and fair play? How do you see that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think what the whole intent is, and if you look at the whole thing — and we don't do it that way — but as a package, the amendments proposed to the rural, urban, northern municipal Acts, these ones relating to The Municipal Board Act — some of the others that we will be considering as well — is to modernize the assessment system to make it more equitable, more fair.

And in the case of appeals, to shore up, if you like, the integrity of the process at the local level by changing the times required . . . or from the time from the assessment roll is open until the deadline for an appeal is passed and so forth, to try to avoid what I think we've all seen in the past. And I know in your experience, the experience that the member opposite has as a reeve, is that sometimes there's a tendency for a complex . . . an appellant that has what they consider a complex appeal or precedent-setting appeal to try to deal at the local level in a rather frivolous manner, hoping to get a denial so that their appeal can be elevated to a higher level.

So the intent, the broad intent, is to try and have as much decision making as possible done at the local level where the people sitting on the local board of revision are intimately familiar with all the details, are really in the best position to make a fair and proper judgement.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well you've obviously thought this through very carefully and I have the highest respect for your abilities in these areas, and having known you as well as a reeve and a person concerned with rural problems and rural things, and of course now some of this is going to apply as you say to the North and to other urban settings as well.

However, I can understand your argument that some people might want to get into the process in order to carry the process to a higher level. But quite frankly, down home, most folks just want to go into the municipal council and say look, you've raised my assessment on this quarter of land and I think you made a mistake. You're going to be charging me more taxes and I really don't think that that's fair because of whatever reason. Maybe I got an alkali slough that's getting bigger instead of smaller, as you must think it is, and we just want to get this thing straightened out.

And I'm wondering, at that simple level has this made very much change? Or do people still have those same opportunities

that they used to have — simply to go into the council meeting and at a specific time during the meeting set aside when the board of revision is in session and people sit down and chat about these things for a few minutes and get them solved?

Has that part changed at all or will it be changed at all?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the provisions of this Act, or the amendments proposed to this Act, don't affect that process at all. Any appellant who has their situation dealt with at the local level and satisfactorily resolved at that level would never come into contact with the Saskatchewan Municipal Board or any of the provisions that are in the current Act or would be in the Act as amended.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. That was the answer I was hoping for. Now when you talk about the quorum on the board being made easier to deal with, obviously now this is no longer at the municipal level; this is a step higher. What is a quorum on the board, who's on the board, and how do your remarks, in simple language, identify the changes?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the intent of the amendments is to reduce the number of members who constitute a quorum for the appeal process on the Municipal Board, because there may be . . . there's travel costs for instance involved. And these amendments will permit a quorum of one, for example, where . . . this wouldn't be used in a complex appeal, but where there's a fairly simple appeal and what appears to be fairly straightforward in a remote area of the province, then it would reduce the time involved and the travel costs and accommodation costs and so on, if the quorum could be reduced. And broadly that's the intent, is to keep it simple.

(1015)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I understand what you're doing even though I haven't used this process myself. But it does make sense to do that because you have the whole province to cover. And what you're saying, I believe, is that often you will try to have your meetings of this type, of the people involved, close to the area where the problem exists. I'm going to give a scenario and sort of ask you to confirm my thinking and see if I'm right or not.

If there was a problem in the south-west, mostly likely the hearing would be in Swift Current; if there was a problem in the south-east, most likely it would be in Weyburn or Estevan. And of course, if it was up North, it might be P.A. (Prince Albert) or North Battleford. Some place close to where the people are.

So you would then have a board that is provincial based, but the members might come from all over the province. And you don't want to truck people from Swift Current all the way to P.A., so you might say, well we only need two-thirds of the people there today and these guys that are furthest away can probably stay home because they likely don't really understand the problems of the North anyway. And the people most likely to understand the problems would be the ones most encouraged to be at that particular meeting.

If that's the process, you can confirm that. And if that is the process, I would say you are probably on the right track.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that is the process as it is now, in principle, but the numbers of people who would form the panel are reduced to reduce expenses and complications. So the short answer to your scenario is yes, that's how it's seen.

Mr. Goohsen: — It's always good to find out that we're on the right wavelength, thinking through what's happening, so that's great to hear.

Now the fees that we're talking about — how expensive can this be? If a farmer decided he wanted to challenge the process, not so much because he wants to get 40 of his neighbours together to challenge a principle, but simply wanted to challenge something that he has to have done for himself, is he looking at the possibility of being dragged through the court system sort of, as the terms would be used, and cost him the farm?

Would that be possible to happen or is that not there?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the minimum fee is \$50. The range is from 50 to a maximum of 600 based on the amount of the assessment and so on. There's a schedule that's fairly straightforward. Of course an appellant who wished to — it's at their option — engage a solicitor and that sort of thing might have other expenses. But in terms of the fee which permits you to appear before the board and have your appeal heard, the range is from 50 to 600.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well I guess that doesn't seem all that bad when you consider the kind of costs that are incurred. And obviously the government or somebody is subsidizing this process. But I'm glad there are these caps, that people can avail themselves of the system and find justice without having to be afraid that if you seek justice in our society, you automatically may have to sell the farm to pay for winning.

And often times in our society that's what's happens. People who take on these kinds of problems in their own lives find out that they win, but they really lose because, when they're done, they're broke. And the lawyers in the system have eaten up everything that they could possibly gain plus everything they've ever had in life. And I don't think that that is fair in a real, true democracy that I envision, so I'm glad you have those kinds of caps.

The next question I have is one of simple logistics to the rural community. This board, when it sits and takes these appeals, do they sit in seeding time or harvest time, or do farmers have the option to ask or make a request that I want to have my quarter section reviewed, but I can't be there in harvest time.

Are there any provisions that can guarantee people that they can have these things set into time frames that they can work into their lives, or is it hard and fast? Or do you have to have attorneys to represent you, or do farmers for the most part represent themselves at these types of things? And then we'll

get on to some other areas.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, as the member opposite will know, the board of revision is usually made up of members of the local council, and the initial appeal is heard there first. Then if the appeals . . . just say, I'll give you a scenario in your council out in the south-west. Maybe you hear 20 appeals. You deny half of them, and 10 of them you think — that's probably an unusual proportion — and 10 of them you allow. So the ones that you deny would, if they wish, have a recourse, could appeal the decision of your council to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

And so after the board of revision is held, of course your council, being local and being made up of farmers with the very same interests as the appellants, would try to schedule the board of revision at a time that would be convenient for the local farmers or local citizens.

And then once your board of revision has made their decision, then those appeals . . . the appellants then contact the Municipal Board at the provincial level if they want to carry their appeal further. And then a schedule is set out. And at the very same time, the Municipal Board is receiving appeals from all over the province, based on the results of the boards of revision that have been held all across the province. Then they schedule the times and allocate the personnel that they require based on the load, the number of appeals and the regions that they're coming from. And they do try to be flexible and they try to be as accommodating as possible in terms of harvest time, seeding time; that kind of thing.

And there is one provision however, that an appellant must be very careful . . . You do not, as an appellant, have access to this Municipal Board process at the provincial level if you are not present at your own appeal at the local level. You have to have been there in person in order to elevate your appeal if it's denied at the local level. But other than that, every effort is made by the local council and then by the Municipal Board to be accommodating about the kind of situations, like the workload of farmers, in certain seasons.

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

Ms. Murray: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Chairman.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank the Minister of Municipal Government and the member from Cypress Hills for this courtesy.

Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Chairman, is a group of 38 grade 4 and 5 students from Dr. Brass Elementary School in Yorkton. And I make this introduction on behalf of my colleague, the member from Yorkton. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mauri Ingham and Les Herauf, and their chaperon, Mr. Novakowski. They have had . . . Well I think actually they are

just about to have a tour of the building after they've spent some time here, and then I hope to have some time to go and visit with them.

We're very happy to see you here in Regina on this wonderful, warm day and we hope you enjoy your stay here. Would you please join me in extending to them a warm welcome. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 46 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, it's always nice to be interrupted for such a good reason as to have the young people watch how we do the business of organizing the laws of the province. And I think it's very important that they know at this point that in Municipal Affairs, the department you are fortunate enough to be the minister of, common sense and fair play have always been the order of the day. Very rarely have I seen in Municipal Affairs anything that is seriously deviant from a normal, respected way of doing business. And I often wish that at the provincial and federal levels we could conduct ourselves somewhat more in that same light and in that same context and process.

Realistically there are very few problems that we have with this law and the way that you are trying to correct things here. Because quite frankly in my experience, we've had very few people ever come in and ask for the RM (rural municipality) to do a reassessment or to correct the assessment on their properties. Most of the times in my experience, if we had five or six people that wanted just a marginal change, that would be about it.

The only time we ever had any real serious problems was if the whole province was going into a transitional period of some sort where everybody was up in the air and you either had 150 or you had none, kind of a thing. And we never could really blame the process at the local level for those things, because those were the major changes that people had to learn to understand.

And I do recall that when we updated the assessment a few years ago, people just simply didn't understand that you could cut the mill rate in half and you'd have the same tax base and that we were just updating figures to I guess reflect the inflationary dollar values of adding zeros on the numbers.

And when people got to understand that, our list went, you know, rapidly to zero. And we never really had more than a couple of people that wanted to challenge the system. And they didn't even want to challenge it on that basis. They were simply saying, well again we have a quarter section where there's more rocks than you people have given us credit for, therefore you shouldn't have had it quite so high. Those kind of things are important to the individuals and we've always dealt with them.

But it's always been on a very rational, reasonable process.

I'm not surprised at all to hear you say that there's every consideration given to farmers in seeding time and harvest time. I expected you to say that because I wouldn't have expected anything else from either your department and yourself or from the municipal system. But it's nice to have it on the record so that people can go back and read it and say yes, this is what people in our provincial legislature talked about and they confirm it. It's not just a sort of a gentlemen's agreement; it's on the record and we do live by those kind of principles and those kind of standards.

And I want to congratulate you for keeping those kind of standards high in this province, and I hope that you are able in some way to carry that municipal background further into the rest of the realms of government.

And with that kind of a compliment, I guess I probably better quit or people will think I am on the wrong side of the House. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'd just like to apologize and explain what happened to start off with this morning. You were on Bill 46, I was on Bill 45. And I might have an explanation for that. I have a farm background and usually by this time of day we have over half a day's work in and we stop for a 10-minute nap — I just took mine. So I'm refreshed and I'm awake.

I really don't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I thought I better explain that or you'll wonder where I'm coming from.

My learned and very knowledgeable friend from Cypress Hills actually has touched on every point that we wanted to make this morning on this Bill, the proper Bill that we're dealing with.

I just might touch on one thing, that I'm very glad you didn't change the local input of where the farmer can come to the local council and start the process there without costing himself money. And I think we have to keep that local level, that local input.

I would like to add that we have had occasion where not only did we agree with the farmer's appeal, we have helped him follow it up and testified on his behalf. So I'm glad that these type of rules have not been changed so that the farmers do have access without spending a big pile of money, which they do not have right now, and they can follow that process.

So I also, Madam Minister, am satisfied with where we are at.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to respond that. Yes, if I was at home as a farmer, I'd have a day's work done by this time too. But actually now that we're in extended hours, the member may know that we already did some work this morning before we went to bed last night.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and also welcome to Madam Minister and to her officials. I have a question on RM assessments. I wonder if you could just in general inform us on

exactly how the evaluation of the assessment of a piece of farm property is arrived at.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the question posed by the member opposite is an interesting one but I'm not sure that it's really relevant to the appeal process at the provincial level, which is what the amendments to this legislation relate to.

But I would just respond by saying that no provisions for the assessment of farm land are changed by this or any other Act. That's a responsibility of SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency). And it has always been done based upon the productivity of the land. In the case of farm land, it's the ability to produce wheat, and there is no change to that. And any of the provisions of this Act that respect appeals of farm land wouldn't take any different factors into account than have traditionally been used, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. A follow-up question on that. As we know, the whole farm system has been changing rapidly with new crops and new developments that are taking place. If a new crop comes on the scene which dramatically changes the possibility of the value of production on a piece of farm land, how is that reflected in the assessment, or is it ever?

(1030)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, as the member opposite will know, some of the diversity and specialty crops are fairly new, and so for this particular assessment the productivity of farm land based on its ability to produce wheat will still be the basis for the assessment, but certainly, as in the crop insurance programs, new crops are being analysed and new models are certainly being explored in terms of addressing the issues that you raise.

And since the assessment legislation — not in this Act but in the other one — provides for a reassessment every three years, I'm confident that by the next assessment, which will make the base year 1997 — and that work will be done prior to the year 2000 — that we will likely have enough information on the returns from some of the specialty crops to begin to use those as a basis, and the groundwork is being laid for that now.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 7

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I wish to move an amendment to clause 7(1). The amendment to clause 7 of the Bill and section 33.2 of the Act will clarify who must be served with a notice of appeal when a decision of the Municipal Board is appealed to the Court of Appeal.

As the Bill reads now it does not state that all parties to the Municipal Board hearing are required to be served with a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal. In fairness, every party to the Municipal Board hearing should be served with a notice of appeal.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the minister, an amendment to clause 7 of the printed Bill to:

Amend clause 7 of the printed Bill:

(a) in subsection 33.2(1) of The Municipal Board Act, as being enacted by that clause, by adding “all parties to the matter before the board giving rise to the appeal and on” after “appeal on”; and

(b) by striking out section 33.3 of The Municipal Board Act, as being enacted by that clause, and substituting the following:

“Stay

33.3 All proceedings under an order, decision or determination appealed from pursuant to section 33.1 may be stayed by the judge hearing the application for leave to appeal, for any time and on any conditions that the judge may determine”.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, Madam Minister, that it is in order to make a comment on your amendment. Normally, as folks will recognize, when the government brings in a Bill, they pretty well have researched it and know what they're doing. When they bring in an amendment, it normally is something that sends up a red flag for opposition members to be aware of, because obviously last minute changes usually mean that something's going to be changed that ordinarily might trigger some controversy out in the country.

In this case though, I believe that you are doing something that likely you should have caught to start with but didn't and it looks to me like it makes sense that people should be notified about these things. And so I would say for our learned friends out in the country who might be concerned with these matters, that most likely in this case it is not a red flag. And probably they should look at it and see how it's going to affect them, but seriously I don't think it's going to be a problem.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to respond briefly by saying that there are also two other brief House amendments in addition to the one that's being moved at the moment. And these all arise as a result of . . . As you know, this is very complex legislation, and upon introduction of the legislation into the House, when people get to review it — municipalities take it to their solicitors and ask them to look at it — slight wording changes that would constitute an improvement come to our attention. And we therefore bring forward House amendments.

They are considered minor, but they are considered improvements. And it could have been a drafting oversight. It could have been an interpretation that, upon further study, needed some clarification. And that's what these three amendments will be, Mr. Chairman.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 11

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The final House amendment to clause 11 of the Bill on section 33 of the Act will clarify that stated cases from decisions of the Municipal Board continue to their conclusion under the current process if they were initiated before these amendments were proclaimed. Although our legal advice says that The Interpretation Act should see that this happens in any event, it is best to clarify the matter in legislation so that there is no doubt as to what process will be in place for such outstanding cases.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the minister, an amendment to clause 11 of the printed Bill:

Amend clause 11 of the printed Bill:

(a) by renumbering it as subsection 11(1); and

(b) by adding the following subsection after subsection (1):

“(2) Section 33 of *The Municipal Board Act*, as that section existed on the day before the coming into force of section 7 of this Act, continues to apply to:

(a) cases stated pursuant to that section prior to the coming into force of section 7 of this Act; and

(b) decisions of the board made before the coming into force of section 7 of this Act”.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, just a little bit of clarification on this one.

Now it seems to me . . . I just read this very quickly here as it was passed over. It looks to me like those matters that were in the process before this Bill now is made law, when it's proclaimed, they will still then be dealt with under all the old rules. And so people don't have to fear that halfway through a court case or something the whole process is changed and that they will then have to start all over with a new set of rules, and everything will sort of be wound up on that day, and from that day you have a definitive line drawn in the sand of when to start.

If I'm correct on that, then we can see the logic of it, and I'll let you respond.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is exactly right. This simply clarifies that any appeal that's in any stage of the process now will continue under the process that's now in place. And that all future appeals will be dealt with under the legislation as amended.

And there is a piece of legislation called The Interpretation Act which applies broadly to all provincial legislation that would serve to clarify that. But we felt that it was better to clarify it within the legislation itself so that appellants wouldn't have to look to another Act for the clarification they sought.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate that answer, and I think you're on the right wavelength. It does set up sort of a little pink flag for us, although not a red one, and that being of course that it looks to me like we're having to change a lot of things here in anticipation of a major load of complaints when the new assessment process comes into effect in the near future. Is that what we're preparing for?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we think that . . . as the comments that the member opposite made earlier about the fear that struck into the hearts of people when farm land was reassessed and almost in effect doubled about 10 years ago, and people were very afraid their taxes were going to double, but they found that in general the mill rates halved and life went on much the same as it had before.

And we anticipate that as the new assessment system rolls out and people become more familiar with it, understand it, a lot of the fears of the unknown that are out there now will be allayed. But on the other hand, if there is confusion and there are slightly more appeals than you would expect in the normal course, then it's better to be safe than sorry, and so we want to be prepared.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I'm just wondering if you could give us an idea of how many appeals are ongoing at this time and if you have an idea of what kind of a date in the future we could look forward to these appeals being completed with?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I'm advised that there are something over 500 outstanding appeals to the Municipal Board now, that it is anticipated . . . these are basically current appeals, and it is anticipated that those would all be dealt with prior to the end of this calendar year.

Ms. Julé: — Madam Minister, I'm looking at the clock and trying to rush here, but there's other questions that come to mind. When you have cut the number of members on the appeal board from two to one, why would you do that if you wanted to get these appeals completed by the end of this year? Five hundred appeals are quite a few of them. It seems to me that it would have been better to make sure that there was a sufficient number of members on the board to deal with this load.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is exactly the reason that we would reduce the number of board members required to hear an appeal, so that they would be able to . . . just say you had a panel of six as an example and they had to travel around and every appeal had to be heard by six people. If we changed the quorum to one, those six people can go to different parts of the province and be hearing six appeals simultaneously, you know, in different locations. So the change is meant to expedite the process.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you for that clarification, Madam Minister.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11 as amended agreed to.

Clause 12 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

(1045)

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

The Chair: — There's some new officials. I will ask the minister to introduce them, please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. Still on my right is John Edwards. Behind John is Gord Hubbard, the senior municipal adviser, and behind me is Sharon Markesteyn, a senior policy analyst from the Department of Municipal Government.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I again, Madam Minister, would like to welcome your officials. I only have a couple of questions here.

Going back to where I started before when I was mistakenly on the wrong Bill, but when we changed the grace period of advertising from, I believe it was, six months back to January 1, can you tell me the reason for that, Madam Minister? I have a bit of a problem with that, that anyone, for possibly reasons not being of their own doing, are somewhat late, and you got a council that had a problem with that person for whatever reason, could get carried away and cause somewhat of an embarrassment. And I don't think that's really what this was intended to do.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the basic premiss, the objective, of the amendments is to shorten the period of time that a municipality can take title, for tax enforcement, to property. Now the municipality doesn't have to shorten up their time lines, but right now if they do everything in the most expeditious possible way and there is no hope that the taxes will ever be paid — for example, the property might even be abandoned — the minimum length of time is about 28 months.

So these provisions are to make that . . . to shorten up that time. And I think it's important to note the principle that other taxpayers are carrying the load for those property owners who are not paying their taxes.

As long as the situation is fair and allows ample time and an appeal process at each step, then it seems like a positive thing to do. And it certainly has been asked for by clerks' associations, administrators . . . administrators from rural and urban Saskatchewan, that we do allow — not make it mandatory but allow them — to shorten up the process in cases where they know that taking title to tax property seems inevitable.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I agree with that wholeheartedly. I was just questioning whether we

had gone maybe past the part that we should have.

One other question, Madam Minister, is when we advertise as RMs, the list of arrears, and the first time a person is in arrears we can advertise, at that point, the next year, if he stays in arrears, we do not advertise. Is this part of a law? Or is there a reason for this?

We always felt this was in a very poor piece of legislation, if that's the way it's really set out and meant to be. Because a person that got in arrears and then paid his way out of it, got clear, and went back in is advertised again, where the ratepayer that never made an attempt to even get out of arrears was only advertised once and then he was let go.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the procedure is now that when you fall into arrears, then the list is published in a newspaper that circulates locally. If another year goes by, you're still on this list, but you also then, you have reached a stage where the municipality can take a lien. And then they serve you, the ratepayer who is in arrears, with that legal notice. But you're technically . . . like you're still on the list from the time you first fall into arrears until the issue is settled one way or another.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes, thank you, Madam Minister. I realize that, but I think where the problem was is that when you stay in arrears, that officially in the newspapers, etc., that the list is advertised. Unless I'm misunderstanding the law right and we weren't following the letter of the law, that we could only advertise once; if they stayed in arrears, we were not eligible to advertise in the newspapers the second year. Whereas the person that really tried to pay his arrears, say by November he paid them but then he got caught and he went back into arrears, he could be advertised again.

So my feeling was that the person that was really out there trying to keep his taxes paid was actually being penalized over the person that said, I'm not really going to worry about it; I'll only be advertised once.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the issue in an interesting one, but it's not a cumulative thing. Like you may be in arrears for one year, and that's the year your name would be published on the tax enforcement list. But you might not be . . . and that may be cranking its way through the system with liens and mediation and all the other things that flow from that. In the meantime there may be a different year that's not in dispute that you're not in arrears for.

So you only . . . your name is only published, you only come on the list, when you fall into arrears. And then that's deemed to be following the process that's prescribed for that. And each year is a separate issue. The same as if you win an appeal on one year, it's not a blanket situation for other years. Each year is a separate issue, and that's why this happens.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. But I think we're maybe not grasping where I'm coming from here.

We have had occasion to have a ratepayer that was in arrears

for possibly seven, eight years. And that was my next question so I'll bring it into this one. My problem was with the mediation board, Madam Minister. It seemed to me that there was no set rules. And in this ratepayer's case, he was a real pro at bending the rules, using the mediation board to his advantage, Farm Debt Review, or whatever means he could go through, and ended up owing us in excess of \$40,000 taxes.

And we knew he knew and everyone else knew he was going to lose the land eventually. But he used these tools to hang on to it and actually farm it for nothing because he was not paying taxes, he was not paying the bank his mortgage payment.

But through all the loopholes he could find . . . And the mediation board was the biggest problem we had here because he could lead them along, and they kept telling us well no, we can't grant consent right now because he is going to try.

I think this is the problem, Madam Minister, is that that person should have been able to . . . we should have been able to advertise that that person was in arrears so much here; he just kept getting worse and worse.

I guess maybe it's not a nice way to look at it because we're out to protect our ratepayers like everybody else, but this was an exception. And I felt the embarrassment we could've caused him, for lack of a better word . . . He had no intentions of paying his taxes. He had no intentions of paying FCC (Farm Credit Corporation), or whoever, the mortgage.

He was using the system to get away from it and after 10 years finally the accumulated interest and everything is built up. The bank had to take over the land. Everybody was a loser except one person and that was the ratepayer that wouldn't pay his bill.

And I felt he should be able to be advertised every year and at least the public would know. Because when you advertise one year, a lot of the other ratepayers feel that this person has cleaned his act up. And in essence, he hasn't touched his tax bill at all.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, actually the provisions of the amendments that are being proposed here are meant to shorten up that process. But I think it is important to recognize that human ingenuity is almost infinite. But the taxes, the assessment, is not on the person — the assessment is on the property on an annual basis. And I know the member opposite is aware of that.

But this is meant, these provisions are meant, to shorten up that process, particularly when there is a situation where people at the local level know that in the end enforcement is going to be inevitable. Then why drag it out for 30 months? Why not compress the process? And that's what this does.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just one little short reply to that. I'm not trying to be very hard this morning for any farmer that is possibly sick today and in watching this, because I would hope that would be the only way he'd be watching this. I'm not trying to be hard, but I think we have to run RMs and that as a business also. And this is one of the

loopholes I feel that is a weak spot.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, a few minutes ago you alluded to the 20 months that it could take under the present system to take title of land. And you say that that has been shortened. Somehow I missed the minimum amount of time now that it would take under your new provisions — the minimum amount of time that it will take for an RM to take title.

And then in doing that answer, would you briefly discuss whether or not this is then mandatory on the RM to take this action in that short period of time, or is there still some discretion as to the process that a local municipality might take? In other words, if an RM thought, well it looks like this guy's got his act together; we can give him a few more months, do they still have that discretion or are they compelled to obey by the order of this law and go ahead and seize the property?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the reply to the member opposite on this issue is that the minimum time under these new provisions would be 16 months. And yes, it is voluntarily, and the discretion at the local council level is certainly respected, because as the member knows, there are various situations that can occur. There might be times when it's in the public interest to be very expeditious when there's property that's seriously deteriorating, when there's perhaps health and safety factors in the deteriorating building or property, something like that.

But yes, the minimum is 16 months and discretion at the local level is still the order of the day.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate the fact that that provision is still available to local people, to make some decisions for themselves. And of course, my municipal background, I will say that we had hoped that this kind of legislation would come forward a long, long time ago and we're glad to see that it's finally here. Certainly 20 months is far too long for people who want to play games to be able to play games, and yet for those folks that do need a little extra time, that discretionary process being built into it.

Sixteen months I think is adequate time. We always thought that that would be far sufficient to take care of the problems that we had back at our home town level. And so I think probably this is overdue and we are glad that you're getting the job done.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 86 — An Act to amend
The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act**

Clause 1

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, two different officials have joined us. Doug Morcom is behind me, manager of rural

revenue sharing; and Grete Nybraten, manager of urban revenue sharing.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'd like to again welcome your officials here discussing this Bill.

Just a few questions, Madam Minister. And I'm just trying to understand here, with revenue sharing for RMs, how this Bill will affect . . . and will it come into effect, when we're talking about organized hamlets or equalization or unconditional grants, I guess, maybe for lack of a better word.

Normally the first quarter is paid in April to June and I understand right now they haven't been paid to date. Will this quarter be being paid out shortly?

(1100)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the payments will be made on June 17.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister. Okay, now going into the changes in the amendments here. Will this in any way affect the way these payments are made throughout the year? I believe the second is in July to September and so on. It's set out through the year — the fourth and final quarter is paid out in December.

Will this in any way affect any of these grants that are paid out?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question of the member opposite is no. These amendments are simply to formalize the announcements that were made in the budget.

And we said that the amount of the revenue-sharing pool for 1996-97 — the current year that we're in — would remain exactly the same, at \$79.8 million; that urban municipalities, having a different formula, would receive in effect exactly the same amount that they received last year. And in fact the same is true of northern municipalities. Letters did go out to northern municipalities right after the budget, advising them that their revenue-sharing grant would remain constant.

As you know, in the rural revenue sharing it's somewhat different. The funding will remain the same but the allocations to individual rural municipalities may shift somewhat as between the conditional and unconditional pools, as you know. It depends what they undertake. And I think the individual municipalities understand that, that there will be some variances but the size of the pool is the same.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to touch on futures for a minute. Have futures for this year, for the '96 year, been paid at this point?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, nothing has been paid out on futures as yet this year, but the work is being done on that. And as soon as . . . I can't give you a date right now, but as soon as the budget is approved and we do have supply, then

cheques will be going out as subsequent to that.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Can you maybe tell me what the amount is out there on futures. And I realize we're straying a wee bit here, but I really would like to know what amount is left out on futures right now.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the total outstanding on futures, I'm advised, is \$18.9 million, but as the member opposite will know how that system functions, that's not an amount, a total, that would be paid out this year. But it is an account payable to municipalities.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I think that the part . . . I believe if we go back to '92, Madam Minister, we could go what, four years into futures and that was cut back by your government to '92, which by the way — or to two times — which by the way I vehemently opposed. I feel that cost is heavy out in rural Saskatchewan on our road construction programs.

But I think what I'm trying to get here is, is the futures going down? Is there a trend here that they're holding about the same? Are they going down?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, just roughly in figures, they'll be paid down between 3 and 4 million this year, but they went up in excess of 5 million last year for two factors, I guess. One was the extensive damage to roads caused by flooding in the spring that needed emergent repairs. And the second factor would have been the wish of municipalities to participate in the infrastructure program and to access some additional funding through that program. So the futures had a slight increase over the normal pattern last year.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd just like to touch on a couple of the other grants that we receive out there and we rely very heavily on. And I know my own RM especially, the regravell grant that we found was a very valuable grant. Is there any changes coming to these grants, like the regravell grant or even the maintenance grant for that matter?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the regravelling and maintenance gravel grants will be paid out the same as last year. And they will be paid out at the same time of year, and they will not have to submit an account.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I think that's a great improvement too over . . . it cuts down the paperwork.

A side question to that, Madam Minister. I know in my own home RM, and there's a good number of them in the province, are running out of gravel. Is there any consideration being taken or some type of a new set-up to assist these RMs? Because I know my home RM, and I know there's others in the province and probably many of them now, it's getting to be our biggest expense out there, is to bring gravel in from farther and farther and farther. In our case we're hauling . . . we may end up hauling about 60 miles from Manitoba. Is there anything in the works to help these RMs out?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I can't be specific and it wouldn't be research . . . it would be done by Municipal Government. But I know that the Department of Highways, together with the SRC (Saskatchewan Research Council) and other bodies, is trying to do some work on this and using various other forms of stabilization and so on to reduce the need for gravel. And as you know, it's a problem province-wide, not only in supply but then in damage to roads as the hauls get longer and longer and longer.

And so other technologies are being looked at, but I guess the supplies of gravel are finite so the problem is to find some kind of a substitute or an alternative technology for road building. And I do know that that research is going on, but I haven't heard that there's anything that will be available in the very near future — something that has to evolve.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just one more question, Madam Minister, and it's been brought to my attention now, and I've been out of touch with it for a few months. But where we used to have the Department of Highways would come and do prelims for us and stuff and like that, that has been removed now and we have to go out and hire a private firm to do it. Can you give me the reason for that happening? Was this strictly financial or what was the reason for it?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm aware of the situation that the member raises, but I really couldn't comment on it. It would be a Highways' decision. It would be a decision that's made by the Department of Highways, and whether it was affected by the reduction in staff or whatever the reasons, I wouldn't want to speculate. But it would be their decision.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, a couple of things come to mind as we listen to you discussing the changes that you're making in this Bill. It seemed rather odd to me that we're talking about running out of gravel in rural Saskatchewan, which is reality. I know of places where if you can get fine sand you call it gravel because that's the best you got. I asked an engineer one day, what specifications do you use to determine what's good gravel . . . and good gravel. And he says, whatever is available in your area is good. If you've got better, use it.

But anyway the truth of the matter is that we are running out of this product in a lot of areas, and yet we heard a little while ago, a couple years back, the minister of Highways alluding to the fact that he was going to turn our paved highways back to gravel. And I was wondering now, I wonder where he's going to get the gravel from if we're running out. So maybe there's some hope here. By running out of gravel, maybe we can get our roads paved again. You just never know. Things might work out after all.

I just also thought that, because I live in an area of the province in south-west Saskatchewan where the great Cypress Hills has the unique feature of having had mother nature millions of years ago drop a whole parcel of rocks on us . . . in fact we have what are called cobblestones, and they're little rocks that are rolled up and become round as a result of mother nature

rolling them along, I guess, or so the theory goes. Well it just so happens, Madam Minister, that we have probably a hundred million tonnes of these little round rocks out there, and we'd be quite happy to sell them at a very reasonable price if you want to spread them around the whole province and have a new gravel program.

But getting off the lighter side, we want to get serious for a minute about the things that you alluded to in terms of the shifts, Madam Minister. And that would be the shifts that you're going to be making between municipalities on the grant process. That worries me because we need to know from you specifically what triggers those shifts and what qualifies municipalities to get in on those shifts.

Because quite frankly, when the futures were frozen and your government proceeded to go from the four-year plan down to the two-year plan, many municipalities believed that the councils that were better managers — not wanting to put anybody else down too much but it's quite simply put — they felt that they had done a better job of administrating the available funds and the available programs. And all of a sudden in history they had capitalized on everything to the best of their ability, but now they were being penalized and being held back in order for others who hadn't been so diligent to catch up.

And that worried a lot of people because what really happened was an awful lot of contractors ended up not being hired. There was a program in place that was pretty steady and pretty costed. And so a lot of roads were being built on a very intelligent plan. Lots of municipalities, our own included, had basically five-year plans, and each year, one year dropped off. You added the next one on, and you started thinking about which roads you're going to do in the future, kind of thing. And it was sort of well orchestrated. In fact I hope the Minister of Highways is listening because it might be a good approach to use in getting some of our provincial highway programs in place, a little forward planning.

Madam Minister, this whole thing then threw everybody out of kilter as to their planning. And now we're worried in rural Saskatchewan. And I've had people ask me, where are these shifts going to take place and how do you access these shifted monies? What would you have to do to match the criteria necessary to get in on these shifts in the programs?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, first, before we get on to the sharing, I'd like to go back to the paving of roads. And the member opposite knows where the road leads to that's paved with good intentions.

An Hon. Member: — I've been there and back.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Welcome to the club.

I know that the questions the member raises are really profound questions about future planning for rural municipalities. And I think it was seen — and I know the municipality that I was a reeve of as well as the member opposite's references to his experience was — that it was really much more efficient in the long run to have a long-range plan to be able to construct a

certain piece which exceeded your annual budget. But while the machinery was there and, you know, while the equipment was on the site, it's much more efficient to do the whole piece rather than bring them back and do, you know, a mile a year and that sort of thing.

But I think it was seen, and as time goes on we can see even more clearly, the need for municipal road planners to get together with highway planners and somehow to rationalize all of the planning for the system in Saskatchewan.

Because as we're going to see rail-line abandonments, elevator closures, it's really important to make sure that we're building for the future and not building roads that are going to become stranded investments because the elevators that it leads to are going to be closed or a branch line is going to be abandoned, and another place where it's going to change the traffic patterns.

So I think in that sense, while it was a bit of a shock to the system, it is a good thing to stand back and take a look and do some long-range planning to make sure that we're getting the best future use out of the dollars we're investing, be they the dollars raised at the local level or dollars from the revenue-sharing pool.

And we will be talking extensively at the round table with the executives of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and with their membership about the future roles of revenue sharing and the future rationalization for building and maintaining the road network, the transportation network, in this province. And we look forward to their advice as we work through this process.

(1115)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Only one thing that you missed in that, and that is where do you anticipate the shifts will occur that you alluded to earlier?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, it's . . . there are two parts to it, I guess. One is the future, what will happen in the future, and that's what we'll be talking about. Because as the size of the revenue-sharing pool shrinks, the factors that are used to distribute the money are . . . the process becomes very skewed. So we need to take a fundamental look at that for the future.

If the member is talking about this year, well rural municipalities know that some of the grants reflect their costs; there's caps on some. And it's if they build a road for example and get gravel at a lower cost, for whatever reason, than they did the year before, then that's reflected in the actuals.

So basically the formula for this year hasn't changed but it always delivers some shifts because some of it is conditional.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I thought though that I had understood you, Madam Minister, just suggest that there were going to be shifts in the way the revenues would be shared for futures

grants, not just for this year.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — No, Mr. Chairman, I wasn't referring to what we talk about as the "futures," being the money that's advanced for road construction that we've sort of coined the term that it's "futures."

What I was talking about was where we go from here, from this fiscal year and onward, with the principle of revenue sharing, and how we change the size of the pools — whether the \$20 million cut for instance for next year that's been announced — whether that's prorated between rural and urban; how that's happening; how that will happen. That's what we need to consult about. And that's what I meant about that future as distinct from the road allocation futures.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that clarification. The problem I see as we are developing this plan, and it seem to me that whether we admit it or not we're developing a plan here, and the plan seems to be that we're going to equalize everybody in the province and we're going to equalize all of the municipalities one to the other.

And the problem is that all of our wants are not the same out in rural Saskatchewan. And certainly not all of our needs are the same. For example, people who live in the oil patch have a lot more needs for roads to be built and reconstructed than people who don't have them there. It's a very simple fact of life that, where you have heavy trucks hauling oil — which is a live, liquid load — and a lot of machinery being moved around, obviously those roads take more of a beating.

The 24 hour a day, 7 day a week, 12 month a year philosophy that goes with that industry dictates of course that they are on the move all the time — good weather; bad weather. Sometimes the farmer will haul grain when it rains, but most of the time he stays home until the road's dry. The oil industry stops for nothing. They don't know the word "weather." They haven't thought of it or heard of it, they just work all the time. I admire them.

But the truth of the matter is that roads get beat up pretty bad and it does cost municipalities an awful lot more money to maintain their roads where this industry is presently working.

So attempting to have equality throughout the system and throughout the province simply will not be fair, because those municipalities that are providing for those roads in order for that industry to be there certainly cannot afford to be — not fairly — should not be expecting to take taxes out of other industries, like agriculture for example, in order to pay for those roads.

Because after all, all of society does prosper in Saskatchewan when the petroleum industry or some other related industry like that — or even a grain terminal — while they are there and producing some immediate benefits to the area, for the most part. There's an awful lot of tax space that goes to the province and benefits all of the province, and yet we are seeing that all of the tax monies are going into general revenue and none of them are being targeted, dedicated, shared, brought back, or fairly

used — whatever term you want to use — back in those areas where the roads are being beat up in order for these industries to exist.

Right now we've got situations where people are out with their cameras taking pictures of these roads that they're going to be sending to you — I happen to be aware of that — because the oil industry obviously has to keep working through these rainy, spring weather days that we've had. And just as spring seeding is as important to farmers, so too the petroleum industry has to keep on working in order to keep a bottom line that isn't in the red.

And so I don't blame them for working and keeping on, but at the same time, they live in a billion dollar industry with lots of money around; we don't think that you can have a philosophy of everybody shares equally. It can't be that way because it's not fair, because our wants are not the same and our needs are not the same. And I'm wondering if you have built that into your equation?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we haven't done that as yet, but that was what I referred to in the terms of the consultations about what we do in the future with revenue sharing. And I don't believe that I did use the word equalization at all. The member opposite has brought that into the discussion.

And I guess those are the kind of fundamental questions we'll be wanting to ask, because I agree with you. There's not only the oil patch; there's all kinds of resource roads. Like in the North, some municipalities have a high pressure from timber-hauling roads. There's . . . we referred to the gravel hauls getting longer and longer, the access to grain terminals, that kind of thing. And these are the principles that we seriously need to address. And will we continue to give a base grant for instance to a community that's declining, or will we divert that revenue over to a community that's growing?

These are the fundamental questions that we need to address and there aren't any foregone conclusions in what will be the result of this. We appreciate your viewpoint, and we'll certainly be inviting the viewpoints of the public and ratepayers and SUMA and SARM as we move forward.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only have one more question, Madam Minister, I missed before. My hon. colleague beside me touched on the \$20 million cut-back for next year, and I think we've touched briefly on this in one of the previous sessions we've had. But some of the questions I get from RMs out there and towns, and for that matter, the cities: has your department, your officials, or for that matter the government itself, looked at ways of how they're going to counteract out there the \$20 million cut-back?

In my estimation, they have two ways of going. They have to either cut services or raise taxes. Has this been looked into at all, of where they may either cut services or how to raise taxes out there, when we've been trying to keep the line and raising them as minimally as we could, seems to be . . . to me, not an avenue we can use. And yet we're being unloaded on another

\$20 million.

Can you explain to us where you think some of these service cuts may come, or how we can raise taxes?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this is what I referred to earlier in that we need to have the consultations with the local governments about how the reductions will be applied. We don't know . . . we can't make recommendations on how to deal with it when we don't even know yet which kind of communities will be affected or how the cuts will be applied.

But we want to work through it with them and what we suggest is that no matter what else happens or which communities get the money or in what form, whether it's conditional or unconditional, one way that obviously savings can be achieved is by sharing services or by municipalities working together more closely to try and be efficient.

And I know I've visited some parts of the province where there are models — the member from Cypress Hills will know — where communities are working together. They have such a long history of providing services in a cooperative way that when you look at what they're doing, you can't even imagine how it can be improved upon. There's such good inter-municipal cooperation.

Now if we can move that kind of a model across the province to the point where all municipalities were doing that, the savings would be enormous. And the level of services that could be sustained, even in sparsely populated areas, would really surprise a lot of people, I think.

So I think that's the key, is work through it together, cooperate as much as possible in order to mitigate the damage done by the cuts or the need, on the other side, to increase municipal taxes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess we have come to a point where we would like to agree to disagree. I believe, Madam Minister, that the towns, the RMs, or the small towns especially, and the RMs are already sharing many services, as you well know as being a past reeve.

Now to state that probably we can save \$20 million, I think, is a pipe dream. Many of these RMs have been cut back. This isn't the first cut-backs they've had, or the towns either, or the cities. So they've been trying to share services and whatever. I believe there's possibly money to be saved out there, but I think it's a myth to try and put across the perception that \$20 million can be saved.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't ever say that \$20 million could be saved. But I did say that by becoming more efficient and cooperating with each other that certainly savings could be achieved which would mitigate the effect of the cuts.

But I think it's important for the member opposite to recognize that we as a provincial government are right in the middle. I mean we don't like to cut back revenue sharing to the local municipalities, but we have had substantial cut-backs from the

federal government.

And if you look at our four-year budget plan that the Finance minister presented on budget day, not just a one-year plan but a four-year plan, the surpluses this year and next year, while they are on the positive side, are very fragile. And so in order to achieve that balanced budget and eventually reduce the interest costs that we're paying, to secure the future for our children and grandchildren, we have to take some hard decisions now.

And the local governments have done a very good job of coping. And we know that we can count on their cooperation in the future as well.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 118 — An Act to amend The Trust and Loan Corporations Act

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today Brent Prenevost, Crown solicitor; and Linda Zarzeczny, who is the deputy superintendent of insurance.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and welcome to the minister's officials. Mr. Minister, I just have a few brief questions this morning. Can you explain the major change that is brought about by this Bill and why it was necessary to make this change at this time?

(1130)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, the amendments are proceeding at this time in anticipation of future developments in the revolving credit industry, driven in a large part by technological change. For example, their smart cards are a much anticipated innovation which provide consumers with access to money equivalents through electronic means. These products are being piloted in Canada, in Guelph, Ontario, over the next few months.

These new services will present new challenges for regulators. Because of that, here in Saskatchewan we want to get this information available so that we can regulate it in our legislation so that possibly if they do a western Canada pilot we can do it in Saskatchewan.

The regulator will also, because of the additional responsibilities, be in a position to request and receive information from these companies prior to and as a condition of licensing, so that we can get greater detail about the scheme through regulation, which would then assist us in being ready if there are further legislative changes that are needed.

So practically it's an attempt to be right at the forefront of technology as it relates to primarily revolving credit companies and then this smart card business.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, is this similar legislation that was drafted perhaps in Ontario that already has the smart card?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We're not aware of any amendments that have been made in Ontario. So this is our unique amendments here in Saskatchewan so that we are ready here for anything that's done.

And basically, as I had pointed out before, you know, the main purposes of the Act are consistent regulation of loan corporations by expanding this definition of loan corporation to include the revolving credit, and then also the appointment of the Superintendent of Insurance as the administrator of Saskatchewan-based loan companies which provide revolving credit in these circumstances.

So we're trying to be, I guess, in the industry and ready if in fact some of these things come to Saskatchewan, which we anticipate they may well do.

Ms. Draude: — I'm wondering if consumer protection was one of the guiding forces you kept in mind when you were drafting this legislation.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's the main reason that we regulate, and so that's . . . consumer protection is the main reason.

Ms. Draude: — The change in the definition of the term "loan corporation" has changed quite significantly in this Bill. With the deletion with almost any reference to real estate, the companies that are covered by this legislation will increase significantly, I understand.

Can the minister give us some examples of specific companies that will now be covered by legislation that weren't covered before?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The companies that will be regulated by this legislation won't notice much change at all. But they move from being part III companies to part II companies, and it increases slightly the powers of the superintendent to regulate. And I guess we're just concerned about the revolving credit business — that it's very clear that they're included in this part of the legislation.

Ms. Draude: — Are you informing some of the companies that will actually have this change now, even though it is maybe not something that's brought to their attention? Are you going to bring it to their attention?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's one company that's involved, and they have been notified and they know about this. And any other companies that would come to Saskatchewan would find out about this. And we've advised them. But we've had consultation with the industry, obviously.

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

Mr. McPherson: — For leave for the introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would like to introduce to the Assembly . . . through you and to you to the Assembly, in the Speaker's gallery, a group from the Assiniboia Composite School. We have nine grade 12 students with teachers, Ms. Antosh, with them today. And I'm not sure who the chaperons are and my eyesight isn't good enough to pick out . . . it could be relatives for all I know. I just can't see good enough.

But I want everyone here to welcome them to the legislature today. And we'll be having drinks and photos and some discussion here within a few minutes. So please give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 118 (continued)

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, this new legislation actually involves mostly the revolving credit which is usually credit cards, and I understand it affects companies with their head offices in Saskatchewan mostly. I'm not sure of any companies that have credit cards with their head offices in Saskatchewan. Are there a number of them? Can you give me an example of them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The one company that is here now is the CUETS (Credit Union Electronic Transaction Services Inc.), the credit union electronic transfer system I think it's called, something like that. And that's for the credit union system. That's the one that's here now. But we're in a situation where companies are looking at other jurisdictions where they might come, and so this is clearly open for business kind of legislation. We're saying look, if you want to come here we have the regulatory structure that would allow for the regulation of your industry in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Are the companies that are being affected by it, for instance the credit unions and the new ones that would be considering coming into the province, are they happy with this new legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The consultations we've had basically are that they're content with this legislation. They don't see it as any threat to their business at all.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one final question, Mr. Minister. Can you explain how the powers of the Superintendent of Insurance have been changed through this Act?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The powers haven't been changed. They've been allowed to expanded slightly to cover a little bit larger group of companies including these revolving credit ones. The one power that's been specifically spelled out is the ability of the superintendent, when a company is in trouble, to step in and try to help the company get all of their financial affairs sorted out.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have no further questions. And thank you to your officials.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank my officials for their able work on this Bill, and I'd like to move that we report this Bill unamended.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 109 — An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act,
1995 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995
sur les services de l'état civil**

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his official.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me is Shelley Gibson who is the acting director of vital statistics.

Clause 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to welcome the minister and his official, Ms. Gibson.

I would like just to go right to clause 4, and I note that clause 4 states that this repeals a section that outlines fees for registration of births and deaths. The reason for this being repealed is that fees are normally prescribed in regulations. As you know by now, Mr. Minister, we do prefer to see regulations before a Bill is passed. In this case, the Act does state important information that would otherwise be left to unseen regulations.

Why would you remove a section that states very clearly what the fees are to be, only to then replace it in the regulations that are unseen and not easily available to the general public until they are passed?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the reason for the change, Mr. Chair, is that, as the member can see, there's a fee of 25 cents for the registration of a birth, death, or a stillbirth under the circumstances prescribed in the present provision, section 40, which is outdated. And rather than take up the legislature's time every time the fee is changed, we believe that it is more appropriate to set the fee by regulation.

And I might say to the member that this is more or less the standard practice in legislation these days, is to do the fees by regulation so that you don't take up the legislature's time. And in fact if you didn't do it that way, you might have to amend dozens and dozens of pieces of legislation each session just to

go from 25 cents to 50 cents and so on and so on. So it really is much more practical to do it the way we're proposing to do it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Clause 6 permits the director to disclose information and records of change from vital statistics for using and providing . . . for use rather in providing post-adoption services. What kind of information would be provided by vital statistics that would be of value for post-adoption services?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, to the member, Mr. Chair, the information would be things like a copy of the adoption order, a copy of the birth registration, information with respect to parentage and statutory declarations of the parents.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I omitted . . . just going to clause 5 if I could go back to that for a moment. Clause 5 apparently changes the requirements for the release of confidential information. The reason that I have is that as of September 1, 1996 adult adoptees and birth parents, when agreed, will be able to obtain a copy of the adoptee's birth registration which will release more information than is currently available.

Now it's my understanding that with an agreement . . . or up till now if there was agreement on the adult adoptee's part and the birth parents, that they would be able to get information released to them already. So I'm wondering where the change is here, and what kind of an additional change there is to that information that's already given — or not information but that allowance that it's already given for information?

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The information can be released by Social Services to the adult adoptee or the natural parent if they both consent. That change in the law was made. But if Social Services wants to get information from vital statistics to give to them, vital statistics is not entitled to release the information to Social Services.

This is sort of a companion amendment to what should have been done when The Adoption Act was amended, but it wasn't done. So this indeed would then conform to the situation you're describing and that you also described when you spoke to the Bill in second reading — I thought quite accurately — in terms of the way the system is designed to operate.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, what are the time frames going to be for the release of information as is in the amendment here?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Once the director of post-adoption services at Social Services makes a request to vital statistics, it would take about 24 hours for vital statistics to get the information to Social Services, and then their procedures would determine how long it took them to get the information from Social Services to the adult adoptee and/or natural parent.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, these are all the questions that I have at this time, and I thank you very much for your assistance in giving this information. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the member from Humboldt for her questions, and also I'd like to thank Ms. Gibson for her assistance today.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Mr. Sonntag: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Chair, I would like all members to join with me in welcoming . . . our Sergeant-at-Arms' good spouse is in the Speaker's gallery today. Wendy Shaw is sitting in the gallery there and I would like all members to join with me in welcoming her, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Whitmore: — With leave, Deputy Chair, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you. I would like to introduce a former member of the Legislative Assembly, sitting behind the bar, Mr. Allan Stevens. Mr. Stevens is from my home town of Harris and is actually a neighbour of my parents across the street. And at one point in time I financed the construction of his house by buying some farm land from him.

I'd like the Chamber to welcome Mr. Stevens here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting Conservation Easements and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to introduce my deputy minister, Stuart Kramer; director of wildlife, Dennis Sherratt; and legislative analyst, Doug Kosloski.

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And welcome, Minister, and your officials. My first question is, my fear, is the word conservation easement, the differentiation between that

and the regular easement. Can you define the difference between the two of them for me, please.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes. I thank the member for the question. And this is basically a general, broad term, easement, which focuses particularly on conserving a particular piece of land in its natural state for the benefit of wildlife. So that it is a straight easement.

Ms. Draude: — I guess I'm wondering if you have any fear, throughout the Act and especially when it comes to words like determination of it, if there's any chance that you're going to have confusion of easements, if there's going to be an easement that was perhaps in the name of a conservation area, if there's any chance that there's going to be an easement terminated as a conservation easement but actually is an easement that was set out by somebody different without thinking of this Act at all.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Like other easements, like the conservation and development authority drainage ditch easement, it is registered on the land title. This conservation easement would also be registered on the land title, and the C & D (conservation and development) authority waterworks easement would take priority over a conservation easement because it's already there.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll go to section 8 first of all. Section 8 outlines who must be notified before a conservation easement may be submitted to land titles offices. This includes anyone who appears on a certificate of title as well as the municipality affected. However, there is little in this Bill that provides input for landowners and residents from the surrounding area.

The creation of a new conservation easement or terminating an old easement could have far-reaching implications for surrounding landowners. What are the rights and obligations of a landowner compared to the rights and obligations of the holder of the conservation easement?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The conservation easement will simply retain the existing habitat on a piece of land. For an example, if there was a 10-acre slough on a quarter section and the current landowner signed that up as an easement, that slough is there; it would not be expanded. So the effects on surrounding landowners theoretically wouldn't change much because we would not be adding to the habitat; we'd simply be protecting what is there.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, is it possible to include a mechanism to allow for more input from the owners of the land neighbouring future conservation easements?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I don't believe that there would be a mechanism, although there is a six-day review period that somebody could register a complaint.

But I guess if an individual had a piece of habitat on his farm and no family to pass it on to, and he's going to put the land on the market and figuring that if the land was sold privately the bush would be cleared off, but he treasured that wildlife and that habitat and he wanted to see it left in its natural state, I

think it's the landowner's right to have that prerogative. He is simply maintaining what is already there. He would not be expanding the habitat.

And so we like to think that as willing seller, a willing buyer, or if somebody wants to sell a piece of land to an organization or to a neighbour, he shouldn't have to get clearance from surrounding neighbours to do so. He should be able to sell it to who he wants to.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, stakeholders have expressed a feeling that the government is imposing legislation that perhaps requires more input. They have expressed difficulty with the process this government has taken when introducing . . . without their input.

As we've explained, they are concerned about the possible problems that occur to drainage systems. There's also the potential impact of higher wildlife populations on conservation areas. The animals that cause the damage are under the jurisdiction of the provincial government. We realize that the minister has already stated in the House that there was no money for compensation to farmers this year. Farmers in the vicinity of new conservation easements may be subject to even more crop damage by wildlife attracted to this new easement area. Does the government have a plan in place to deal with this possibility?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I appreciate the member's concern. Again the easement will not expand the habitat; it's just designed to preserve what is already there. So we do not anticipate a big increase in wildlife populations.

And certainly what the trend is in fact, is that each year there's more and more land being cleared and drained and broken up. We just look back in the five-year period from 1976 to 1981. We lost two million acres of habitat, which worked out to over 1,000 acres a day or 44 acres an hour, day and night. So we don't really see that there's too much wildlife habitat. In fact what we would like to do is preserve some of what remains.

You mentioned who we consulted with and who is aware of this legislation and who supports it. I would like to use this opportunity to list some of the organizations. We have consulted with these groups, and they've also indicated their support: Saskatchewan Livestock Association, Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, National Farmers Union, Farm Land Security Board, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Saskatchewan Association of Urban Municipalities, Ducks Unlimited, Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Nature Saskatchewan, Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, Farm Credit Corporation of Canada, Canadian Bankers' Association, credit union, Municipal Government, Agriculture and Food, Justice, and Finance.

And these groups have all indicated their support to this, after they've looked at it, and asked any concerns or questions that they had surrounding this legislation.

Ms. Draude: — Specifically I didn't notice that the Conservation and Development Association, the members of that board, were . . . if their input was required. And I guess they are the ones that I'm mainly concerned about. Did you have an opportunity to discuss this Act with them?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The conservation and development area authority Act does take precedent over this Act. For an example, if a community or RM was involved in a drainage project and it had to go through at a quarter section that was in an easement, conservation easement, the C&D Act would take precedent and would override the conservation easement so that could proceed. So that should alleviate that concern.

Ms. Draude: — In section 10, the Bill outlines proposed changes that would enable a landowner to donate or to sell easements for a designated term or for perpetuity. Therefore the sale of the land may not end with the easement . . . may not end the easement. An easement may be lifted if the owner or holder of the land can convince the courts that the continuation of the easement will produce severe hardships for parties.

Could you explain subsection 10(2) and how it interacts with sub-clause (1)(b)(ii).

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The section that you refer to does allow an individual who has land with an easement on it to apply through the courts saying this is creating undo hardship; I cannot make a living on this land. Or farming technology has changed, and the easement is standing in the way of me making more money, so to speak. So that option is there. There could be any number of scenarios. But basically when an individual signs up the easement, he's with the understanding he will not be bulldozing these trees down or draining that wetland. And perhaps three generations from now, times will have changed.

But there is that option to go through the court, and certainly if the current owner of the land has a case, he has an opportunity to present it. And perhaps also the organization or department that signed the easement with the landowner, they may agree voluntarily to change the aggrieved terms of the easement to make it more palatable too. So there's a number of options there.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, could you explain subsection 10(3)? What are the specific steps that would need to be taken in that section?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That section simply says that if an individual was successful in going to court and the court ruled in the landowner's favour that this easement was causing him hardship, on that basis of the court ruling, the landowner can take the court ruling to the Land Titles. And the Land Titles would remove the easement, and the easement would simply be gone at that time then.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, how would the community at large or the people surrounding know this had happened? Would they be notified in some way?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — This is the individual's own personal matter, and I guess certainly word would get out. But similarly, how do neighbours know when a mortgage on a piece of land is paid? I think the information would get out, but it's the landowner's individual, personal business really that he's dealing with. So whether it got out or not, probably wouldn't really matter.

Ms. Draude: — If a conservation easement was put in place because, say for example, there was an area of lady's slippers in there that people wanted to have protected, and then the easement area was removed. If people had been going in there to take pictures and all of a sudden they weren't allowed to any more, is there any way that they're going to be notified and realize that they can no longer go on to that property?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — These easements would all be on private land — basically all would be anyway. So really if I wanted to come and take pictures on your land, I should get your permission to begin with. And probably if I was on that kind of a relationship to have access to your land, you would soon hear if I was planning on getting rid of the easement to destroy the habitat. And of course you could always check with Land Titles to see if an easement is still in place or not, as well. So we look forward to cooperating with landowners and the public with this legislation.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, in section 10(1)(b), this section proposes that an easement may be terminated if the easement produces a severe hardship. In the Kelvington conservation and development area authority, there are 12 quarters of land owned by a reserve and possibly 7 quarters that will need easements on a proposed project. If termination of an easement were asked for and allowed, there would be no access to the drainage systems that would create possible flooding in the surrounding areas.

I'm wondering what would be the impact on the environment if this Bill is enacted?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — What we're discussing here is two different kinds of easements. The conservation easement is to protect habitat. The conservation and development area authority easement is usually to drain wetlands or to drain water off farm land. And as I said earlier, the conservation and development authority easements do take precedent over this Bill we're talking about now.

And also with reference specifically to your comments about land which may be acquired for reserve status, before that happens, all third-party interests, including C&D area authorities, have to be addressed before we would allow the land to transfer over to reserve status.

So again, it's sort of cooperation to try to address everybody's concerns.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, you'd said earlier that there really was no difference in the easements. A conservation easement was much the . . . was the same as a regular easement. So this is where my concern comes in is that they can be . . .

can they overlap? Can you have a conservation easement that's put in . . . an easement put in by a conservation development area authority, and then somebody put a conservation easement just about over top of the same area? Could that happen?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, it could. If there was a C&D area authority easement and the individual decided he'd like to put in land which overlaps that easement . . . that can be done. But a C&D authority easement would take precedent over this conservation easement.

Ms. Draude: — And you could terminate the conservation easement without terminating a C&D easement?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That is correct.

Ms. Draude: — Were going to have to find a different name for one of these, I think.

Okay, I guess then basically if there was a C&D easement in place with a conservation easement around there and there was land that wanted to be taken into the treaty land entitlement area, if an Indian band could prove that by keeping the taxes on there it would provide undue hardship, so they could have it removed — the conservation easement removed — that doesn't mean then it could remove the C&D easement. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I'm not sure exactly what terms and conditions are in place to remove a C&D easement, but it's totally separate from this conservation easement. But there probably are conditions.

And again with reference to your Indian land claim status, again the band may agree, with the C&D authority, that they would pay X number of dollars for indefinitely per year to allow that ditch to continue on that land. And if C&D authority was satisfied — in other words, all third-party interests were satisfied — then the land transaction would occur. But the C&D authority would have to be satisfied that their concerns were addressed in the deal to transfer the land to reserve status.

Ms. Draude: — Is there any chance that taking it to court, to have an easement removed, is there any chance that the court couldn't see the difference between a conservation easement and a C&D easement?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — No, the terms and conditions of both pieces of legislation would be very clear. I'm not a lawyer, but it's there in legal terms, so there'd be no chance of confusion.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That was my main concern . . . is that there is no way — inadvertently even — that an easement could be removed that would actually affect a regular easement.

I just have a couple of other questions. In section 10 and section 11, there's been concern raised by conservation and development area authorities. And we have witnessed in the past two springs, flooding can be a major problem in our province. What impact will this section of the Act have on

surrounding landowners' access to drainage systems which in turn could lead to possible flooding of their land?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — It should have no effect because the landowner still retains the right of access. For an example, if there is a beaver damming up water and flooding the neighbour's land, access could still be made to come in and remove the beaver, whatever. So the current landowner would still be farming the cultivated acres, for an example, so we don't see a problem there either.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials here today.

Mr. Minister, what benefit would accrue to the landowner to take out a conservation easement on his property or to allow an easement to be placed against his property?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Very good question from the hon. member. For many years landowners have been retaining habitat on their land, and often it has cost them money. This Act will enable an individual to sell an easement to either the government or to a conservation organization. Or if the landowner is in a position, he can donate the land to an organization or government and receive a tax benefit.

So certainly there is financial opportunities for landowners here, and it's finally an opportunity to recognize landowners and reward them a little bit for protecting habitat on their land.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you say sell, what kind of monetary value will these easements have or how will a tax benefit accrue to the landowner if he was to allow for an easement?

(1215)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The exact terms would have to be worked out between the landowner and the person or group buying the easement. But I think in general terms from other jurisdictions, uncultivated or unusable land such as a slough would be worth about half the value or 50 per cent of the cultivated land. So if the cultivated land was \$200 an acre, the wetland or the bush, which is non-productive, may worth \$100 an acre.

And if you donated the land to the organization, you can get up to a 100 per cent tax deduction on your federal income tax. That legislation is in parliament right now and hopefully will be proclaimed very shortly.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there any tax benefits accruing from municipal governments, i.e., the property taxes? Would they be lessened, or would there be some easement . . . not easement but relief given from municipalities because of the easements being in place?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There would be no implication. The landowner would still pay the tax as per assessment, and the landowner still owns the land and property, and so there would be no change there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What mechanisms are in place if a landowner has taken an easement, has benefited through either the tax system or from the sale of the easement, what mechanisms are in place then for the easement to be removed? Would they have to refund the sale price? Would they have to somehow give up their tax benefits? What would happen in those cases?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Again if it was in a scenario where a landowner and the organization decided, okay, we can cancel this easement, the landowner would have to pay back any federal tax credits that he got. And also I guess if they went through the court system and the courts decided this was creating undue hardship to the current landowner, again if the easement was cancelled, removed from land titles, the current landowner would have to reimburse the federal government for the tax credits he got.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you had made reference to either a donation of land for a conservation easement or the sale of that land. Now in your reference to a donation of land, are you talking about donating it forever? It's gone. You give it away. Or are you talking about someone saying that this land then can be used for conservation? I will give it up for conservation purposes, but I still retain the ownership of the land?

So does a person have the ability or the right to retain ownership of the land but to donate only for conservation purposes? And if they're looking into the future, they may want to notify the authorities that the so-called donation of the land is no longer in place because they may want to do something else with their own land.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you for that question. Basically what the conservation organization would obtain from the landowner is an easement. So the individual would still own the whole 160 acres. And if they were grazing cattle on it or cutting hay in the sloughs, the agreement would say that that would continue. So the landowner still has the full 160 acres on the quarter section. If the landowner sold it, he would sell 160 acres. The easement would be registered on the land titles. It would go with it, and that easement would simply say that this wetland or this prairie could not be drained or broken up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, you mentioned livestock grazing. Is livestock grazing going to be allowed on these easements initially? Let's say the easement has been issued, and no livestock was being grazed on it at the present time. The ownership changes. The new owner wishes to graze livestock on it which was actually a change from the original easement because nothing was stated on it. Would that then be allowed?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — When the easement was signed and an individual was grazing cattle on the land and wanted to continue to do so, that would certainly be . . . could be part of the agreement.

If there was no grazing on the particular land and the land changed hands, it would, I guess, be up to the new landowner

who certainly would be aware of the easement, and also he would have the opportunity to negotiate with the conservation organization to see if they could have limited grazing on this. And I'm sure there would be some flexibility unless there was endangered plants or something like that, and when the first easement was signed it was strictly pointed out that there would be no grazing to protect these endangered plants. But there would be some flexibility. And certainly from landowner to landowner, the requirements by the landowner does change, and there is opportunity to negotiate amendments to the easement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What if in the original easement, it's silent in relationship to grazing — it says neither you can nor you can't — it's simply silent on it. I can understand if the easement said that there shall be no grazing. Well then when you purchase the land, you're aware that that easement is on there, that restriction, and you may want to try and change that through negotiations.

But if the original easement is silent on grazing, neither for nor against, what impact would that have? Would the new owner then be able to simply commence grazing without reaching negotiated agreements with the holder of the easement?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That again would depend upon the purpose of the easement and what was being protected. Again it would have to be negotiated.

Certainly the new purchaser of the land, before he acquired the land, would be aware of this easement and certainly could check this out prior to buying the property to see if grazing would not be allowed. We envision that most cases the current uses would continue on, but this can change from time to time as well through negotiations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think it's an important point, Mr. Minister, that needs to be clarified. Under this Act, and under the regulations which will accompany the Act, will those regulations and Acts say that only those agricultural practices which are in place the day the easement is signed are permitted and all other agricultural practices are banned unless further negotiation is carried out with the holder to permit further agricultural practices?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Probably this issue of grazing or haying or use or cutting wood on the conservation easement portion of the land would be dealt with specifically when the original agreement was signed up. But there would be opportunity to mend the easement as long as the new owner of the land and the conservation organization was in agreement. So we . . . and also the stipulations of what can and cannot be done would also affect the benefits the landowner would receive in the form of payments. If he was not allowed to graze on a particular piece of land, perhaps the value of the easement would go up.

But it's up to the current landowner who signs up to determine what conditions. And then when the land changes hands, if the new landowner would like to change the condition of the agreement to allow grazing or haying or not allow it, that would be on a mutually agreeable basis.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Therefore are you saying that any time that the easement is silent on an issue that it would be permitted then without negotiation?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — If it was silent in the original agreement, it would mean that it was certainly room for discussion. If grazing was not mentioned at all and the new owner wished to graze livestock, perhaps an agreement on rotational grazing or limited grazing could be reached. So there would be that opportunity certainly when it remains silent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if it is silent and it allows room for negotiation, it must mean then if it's silent that it's banned, unless you negotiate it into the easement then. Would that be true?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The short answer is no. But again . . . the answer is no. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, this does present a quandary. It's not banned if it's . . . you're not allowed to do it if it's silent unless you negotiate, but it's not banned if it's silent about it. So either you can do it without negotiating if it's silent on a particular issue, or you can't do it unless you've negotiated it. So it's got to be one of the two. Now which one is it? Is it if it's silent, you can do it, or if it's silent, you can't do it?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I guess if you wish to operate outside the terms of the agreement, you have to renegotiate. Similarly, if something is silent, for an example if an individual had a piece of land and there was no grazing on it and the new owner wished to graze on it, that is changing the current situation. So you would have to renegotiate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay thank you, Mr. Minister. Any time it's silent then you have to . . . you're not allowed to do it unless you negotiate it.

Okay, another particular issue, Mr. Minister. How long do these easements last for? What is the length of time that they're in place for?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That again is flexible. It can be negotiated. It can be a short term, 3 to 5 years, or it could be in perpetuity.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What length of time is perpetuity?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — It's indefinitely.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, could you please respond again to that. I had some interference.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Perpetuity means indefinitely.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have here the definition of a perpetuity from a legal dictionary, and I'd like to read the pertinent part. "A matter of perpetuity out of commerce for a period of greater than a life or lives in being, and 21 years thereafter plus the ordinary period of gestation."

So perpetuity does not mean for ever and a day. It means for your life, if you signed the easement, plus 21 years plus a period of gestation; so plus another 9 months I assume. So is that what you meant, Mr. Minister?

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I am advised that perpetuity does mean indefinitely until it is cancelled or deliberately terminated. But until such time it goes on and on.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, in this country we have an Act called the rule against perpetuities, and that says that after the 21 years it ceases to exist.

Now you proposed making a change to that a year ago. And the fact is you brought in what was numbered Bill 42, An Act to abolish the Rules Against Perpetuities and The Accumulations Act. That Bill was never passed in this House. Therefore the rule against perpetuities and accumulations continues to stand as an Act of parliament, as an Act impacting on the legislation within Saskatchewan. And I see the minister is busily consulting with some of his lawyers in the background there.

But, Mr. Minister, what happens in this particular case is going to be very interesting. The rule against perpetuities takes force; after a lifetime plus 21 years this easement ceases to exist. What tax implication does it have at that particular point in time?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm getting lots of advice what perpetuity means. I guess certainly the intent is that simply after an individual passes on doesn't mean that his wishes would be absolved. And so there will certainly be technical and legal terms to define what perpetuity means. But the intent is for ever, or until the land titles ceases to exist, or the land base or whatever.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, you see, the parliament of Great Britain at one time believed that no one should be able to tie up a piece of land for ever and a day with the rules and bequests and bequeaths that they want to place on that land. So they passed the law called the rule against perpetuities. And I'd like to read you its definition:

The principle that no interest in property is good unless it must vest, if at all, not later than 21 years plus a period of gestation after some life or lives in being at time of creation of interest.

So that means that while each and every one of us and all the children alive today plus the gestation period of from the time this Act passes or the time the easement is put into place, 21 years thereafter that easement ceases to exist.

So, Mr. Minister, this easement does not last for ever and a day. It lasts for 21 years plus nine months after everyone alive the day the easement is made, ceases to exist.

So if you happen to have a friend who lives to be 150 years old, this easement could then last for 171 years and nine months. But it does end. At the point that it ends, there will be some tax

implications, and what will those implications be, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well I appreciate your comments and we will certainly look at that, but our intent is indefinitely. Similarly, a term can be put on a 150-year easement.

So we realize that nothing is for ever, but at the same time the intent is that indefinitely the land would remain in its natural state as per the wishes of the people that signed it up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think, Mr. Minister, that the use of the words perpetuities in this Act does create some limitations on the Act and obviously some limitations on what your intentions are. Perhaps a different word would be more appropriate than the word perpetuities, because it does get into dealing with the rules against perpetuities.

Now let's say someone does start grazing on a piece of land, Mr. Minister. How will you force compliance if they have done so without gaining the permission from the holder?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There is no mechanism for fines for somebody who breaches the agreement — goes out and destroys the habitat. So that means it's common law and the conservation organization has the opportunity to take the individual to court for breaking the terms of the agreement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's only the holder of the easement who has the right to take the . . . the person who issued the easement, who are allowed the easement on their land, to take them and to try for some form of penalty?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Simply the holder of the easement, as you stated, would have the opportunity to pursue this through the legal channels.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And this would only be through a civil suit process, would it?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 6

Mr. D'Autremont: — I didn't want to let you guys get away that easily. Mr. Minister, under clause 6, I wonder if you can give some examples as to who are any persons, body, or group or class of persons who may hold an easement.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Here in Saskatchewan, groups like the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nature Saskatchewan, the province, and municipalities can also hold easements.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Do the persons or bodies or classes of persons that hold these easements have to be registered entities within the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, they have to be registered as government agencies or non-profit corporations in order for the individual to obtain tax benefits for any donations to the easement program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Does that registration have to be within the province of Saskatchewan or can that be a national registration?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — It's a national registration program but identified in each province.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 46 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — Leave is required to move that the Bill be read a third time.

Leave granted.

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

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that the Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 86 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 86 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 118 — An Act to amend The Trust and Loan Corporations Act

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

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

Bill No. 109 — An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act, 1995 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil

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

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

(1245)

Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting Conservation Easements and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 54 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

The Assembly recessed until 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are such places as Balcarres, Lemberg, Abernethy, Dysart, Saltcoats, Yorkton, and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

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 people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Lumsden, and Lang, Pilot Butte, Assiniboia, and of course the city of Regina. 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 Regina, but also from Lumsden, and Langbank.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition of names of concerned citizens throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding the 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 the decision to close the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many concerned citizens from my constituency of Arm River, from the communities of Tugaska, Eyebrow, Loreburn, Central Butte, and from Moose Jaw as well, which is not in the constituency of Arm River.

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

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

And those who have signed this petition are from communities such as Weyburn, Midale, Yellow Grass, Rocanville, and also the city of Regina.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today and people all throughout Saskatchewan in presenting petitions in the efforts of saving the Plains Health Centre here in Regina. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, I looked through the names on the pages that I have and they are all from the Balcarres area of the province. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates; and

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce to you 24 grade 6, 7, and 8 students from Smeaton School which is located about 85 kilometres north-east of Prince Albert. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Martina Cain; chaperons, Mrs. Lin Mulligan, Miss Vanessa Ferguson, and Miss Murota. She's a Japanese intern visiting their school from Japan.

I'd like you all to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 25 French-immersion students from W.S. Hawrylak School in the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains.

With my limited knowledge of French, I would like to say on behalf of everyone, bonjour, and let you know that they are accompanied by Mme. Joan Sabo, their teacher, and chaperons Tanya Weller, Debbie Novati, Donna Magnusson, and Elaine Jubenville.

Now there are also students who have parents who are within

the Assembly today, and since one very special mom would not be recognized by yourself, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, on behalf of our Clerk, Ms. Gwenn Ronyk, also recognize that her son, Keith, is among the group today.

I would ask all members to wish them bienvenue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and all members of the legislature here, some guests that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are representatives of the town of Kerrobert.

And with us this afternoon — and I'd just ask them to stand and be recognized — are Mr. Angus Philips, a representative of the town council; Mr. Byron Parsons, a representative of town council; Doreen Zane, a representative of town council; Erhard Poggemiller, he's a representative of the economic development committee; Peter Zerr is the mayor of Kerrobert; Anne Debert, a town councillor; Sharon Pope, the town administrator; and Richard Anderson, representing the chamber of commerce.

Mr. Speaker, they are here today to have a meeting with the Minister of Justice to discuss the Kerrobert court-house. I'm hopeful that their discussions can result in a mutually beneficial agreement between themselves and the government.

And I'd ask all members of the legislature to please welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. I'm very pleased to welcome the people from Kerrobert who I met with in April, and I look forward to a fruitful meeting this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, two guests seated in your gallery.

I'd like to welcome to Canada and Saskatchewan, Faye Faichney, who is a resident of Glasgow, Scotland. And I know I didn't quite get the accent down, but my grandmother, who was a citizen of Scotland before she immigrated to Canada, probably could have pronounced your name properly. So I'd like to welcome Faye to the legislature. And she's accompanied by her nephew, Graham Mitchell, who is a resident of Regina.

The two will soon be off to visit the rest of Canada. They leave tomorrow to British Columbia but they'll be back to Saskatchewan. And Faye is here for approximately one month and I hope that she does enjoy her stay in Canada, Saskatchewan, and Regina.

So I would ask her to stand, along with Mr. Mitchell, and welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my words of welcome to those by the member for Regina Wascana Plains to the students from Mme. Sabo's class at W.S. Hawrylak School. Some of these students come from the constituency of Regina Victoria and therefore are well-known to me. And through them I've been able to meet many of the other children in the class and to have met Mme. Sabo.

I don't know the grade 3 children very well, although I do see Alex and Stephan. But the grade 4 students I've known for some time, including Kate and Jodie and Becky and Amanda; Sandy, Rebecca, Sarah, Adam and Greg and Michael and Andrew and Tanner and Andres; and Keith Ronyk, and also my son Justin.

And I wonder if you might again extend them a warm welcome, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is a great pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues, a very special group of students seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. These are 21 students from Lumsden High School — Lumsden being that wonderful town in the Qu'Appelle Valley in my constituency. They are accompanied today by Mrs. Deanna Chernick who is their teacher, and their teacher-aide, Mrs. Luhnning.

Now it's been my pleasure to have been invited on numerous occasions to Lumsden High School, so it's very nice to have them come here and visit us. And it also was my pleasure to teach with Mrs. Chernick for a number of years. So I am very pleased to welcome them here today and I ask you to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

New Grain Handling Facility for Canora

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday many farmers in the Canora area witnessed the start of a long-awaited project. Construction is beginning on the new UGG (United Grain Growers Limited) grain handling and crop input facility at Canora. The \$7.5 million facility will store over 18,000 tonnes in grain storage, and will have the capacity to load 64 cars within 8 hours. The UGG plant will also have a modern warehouse, a full-service facility for fertilizer, and will also clean and dry grain.

If construction remains on target, the new office and crop protection centre should be completed by next summer. It will employ up to 15 full-time and seasonal staff.

I would like to congratulate the UGG officials from Canora who have worked hard to see this project come to fruition. It is

important that farmers in the area have access to a range of efficient and up-to-date grain handling services. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Meewasin Valley Authority Wins National Award

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member from Regina Wascana Plains spoke with justifiable pride of Wascana Park and its programs. Members will know not only is Wascana Centre Authority a model of urban park development, it is also the parent of two other authorities in Saskatchewan — the Wakamow Valley Authority in Moose Jaw and the Meewasin Valley Authority, part of which is in my constituency of Saskatoon Northwest.

The Meewasin Valley Authority for some years has now been charged with overseeing and caring for the Saskatchewan River valley as it passes through Saskatoon and the immediately surrounding area. The river valley is one of the most remarkable geographic features in our province, a place for our enjoyment and natural heritage to pass on to future generations.

The MVA (Meewasin Valley Authority), Mr. Speaker, takes its duties seriously, and I'm happy to report that it won national recognition for its partners for the Saskatchewan River basin program. The National Canadian Healthy Environment Award was recently awarded by Environment Canada.

This three-year-old program is designed to raise public awareness of the basin, which stretches from the Rocky Mountains to Lake Winnipeg. An organization of over 100 active members, chaired by the MVA, runs several projects. Among these is a 400 kilometre eco-canoe, guided tour of the basin, which we all could take once we finish our business here.

It's only fitting that the Meewasin Valley Authority be recognized for its very important work. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Marilyn Armitage

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen of Saskatoon who passed away last week. Marilyn Armitage was known to so many people because of her long career in health care, in the media, and of course because of her exemplary work in community service.

Some of her accomplishments included being director of public relations at the Saskatoon City Hospital, the communications coordinator of the Saskatchewan District Health Board, and an active member of the Festival of Trees, the Saskatoon Jazz Society, the Saskatoon United Way, Big Sisters, and 25th Street Theatre — just to name a few.

Her family, particularly her husband George, her son Brett and daughter Joelle, and many of her friends, were very, very proud of Marilyn whose essence has been captured by the description, "quietly remarkable." I would be most grateful if everyone in

this Assembly would join with me in acknowledging the life and work of Marilyn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Business Program Graduation Ceremony

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you. Last Friday, I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremonies for the Indian business management program of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. These students are graduating at a time when there is a rapidly growing first nations business community in our province. This of course means many opportunities for them to use their newly learned skills.

It doesn't matter whether it's in agriculture, forestry, mining, or tourism; first nations participation in partnerships are evident all across Saskatchewan. As an example of this, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council has demonstrated it is a leader in economic development in our province and is also establishing partnerships on an international basis, as I have mentioned earlier.

There are many other examples too numerous to mention.

Mr. Speaker, I also was pleased to be able to present the outstanding student award to Karen Main. Besides graduating, Karen is a busy wife, and mother of three small children. She has completed an eight-week practicum placement at the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and will be working this summer with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada at the Fort Qu'Appelle branch. She also plans on attending the University of Regina this fall.

I would like to congratulate all the graduates, teachers, and staff at the Saskatchewan Institute of Technologies, along with the Touchwood File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) Palliser campus in Moose Jaw, the chiefs, elders, and families who provided leadership and support.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that their theme was most appropriate and summed up the emotions of the evening: "Like Eagles With Wind Beneath Our Wings, We Soar To Success." Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chief Poundmaker Historical Centre Opens

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to congratulate Chief Ted Antoine and the Poundmaker Cree Nation on the opening of Chief Poundmaker Historical Centre and Teepee Village. The new centre is very important to Saskatchewan. It reflects the rich culture and history of Poundmaker Cree Nation. Chief Poundmaker was one of the great chiefs — a warrior but also a peacemaker.

Our written history is only now beginning to reflect the history and traditions of first nations people who have lived here for centuries and contributed a great deal to our province and nation. The Indian tradition is an oral one, passed on by the

elders, and a little is probably lost with each generation, so it's important to learn as much as we can and to pass that knowledge on to others.

The new historical centre will do that. It will teach tourists and Saskatchewan people alike about the past. But it is also an important step forward. This initiative blends tourism and aboriginal history and resulted in 40 to 50 jobs in construction and in the ongoing operations of the centre.

Aboriginal tourism is a key element in our government's economic development strategy. We know it has tremendous potential and that this centre will be one more great tourist spot for people who visit our province.

This project also represents dedication, hard work, vision, and initiative. I'd like to congratulate the people of Poundmaker, Chief Antoine, and Chief Blaine Favel, who initiated the planning when he was chief of Poundmaker in 1992.

Congratulations to everyone involved. I'm sure that this tourist season will bring lots of visitors to the new centre. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Beechy Primary Health Project

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight an innovative, state-of-the-art health project which is being carried out by the Midwest Health District and is based in Beechy, Saskatchewan, an energetic community of 300 people in my constituency.

This exciting project recently received high praise from participants in a federal-provincial round table on primary health care which took place in Saskatoon. The project was praised for its innovation and effectiveness and for the obvious commitment of the community and the individuals responsible. Health professionals at the round table acknowledge that this project represents the state of the art in primary health services.

In Beechy, primary care nurse Joanne Perry and Dr. Tony Hamilton work side by side to guide the 1,500 residents of the area towards better health. Access to basic health services is assured because Nurse Perry, a graduate of the advanced clinical nursing program, is able to carry out many services normally handled by a physician. She and Dr. Hamilton work together to assess, treat, and dispense medication to residents.

As a primary health nurse, Ms. Perry promotes the good health of residents and works to prevent health problems as well as caring for common illnesses. The primary health team connects residents to a wide range of health services through linkages with home care, mental health, public health, and other professionals in the district.

The Beechy project is an important one. Innovations like this are leading to better ways to provide health services to people in both rural and urban areas.

I want to commend the people in the Beechy area, the Midwest

District Board and staff, as well as Dr. Hamilton and Ms. Perry, for working together to develop this innovative approach. Wellness is well on the way in Beechy, Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Torch Run Week

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned yesterday, this week has been proclaimed law enforcement Torch Run Week, a week during which the province recognizes the contribution our law enforcement officers and the Saskatchewan Special Olympics make to our communities.

Since the Torch Run started eight years ago, it has raised \$450,000 for the Special Olympics. It has also raised public awareness of the event, its 1,500 volunteers, and the 500 participating athletes.

We have praised before the "police work of our police officers". This week gives us the opportunity to mention one of their many initiatives to enrich our communities — and not only our communities, Mr. Speaker.

Since the first Torch Run in 1981, it has spread to over 20 countries involving more than 50,000 law enforcement officers and has raised over \$7 million worldwide. And in turn, the Special Olympics foster hope and encourage personal achievement and fairness in its participants.

The oath of the Special Olympics — "Let me win, but if I can't win, let me be brave in the attempt" — is one worthy of wide publicity.

I congratulate the law enforcement officers of Saskatchewan for their participation in Torch Run Week which sponsors the Special Olympics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political Donations

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a meeting took place yesterday at which the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and I discussed in some detail The Election Act. During this meeting the minister indicated that if new information came to light, he may be prepared to consider a judicial inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, new information has come to light. The Liberal opposition provided information today showing at least \$7 million in political donations to the New Democratic and Conservative parties was not disclosed and might rightfully belong to the provincial treasury.

Does the minister not agree that this issue must be settled through a judicial inquiry? Or does the fact that the NDP (New Democratic Party) failed to disclose more than \$1 million in loans cause him to stonewall?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, it's not a question of stonewalling at all and my friend opposite would know that if he would ever listen to any of the answers or explanations that I give to him either in this House or privately.

The question here, at the root of it, is some kind of a dispute about the interpretation of sections of the Act. That's the question. There is a dispute between our legal advisers, clearly. That's what's at stake. You don't appoint a judicial inquiry just for the purpose of finding out what is the proper interpretation of a law. We've got courts out there to do that. We've got a Chief Electoral Officer who has responsibilities in this area. We've got lots of mechanisms for doing it. We don't need to launch ourselves into a multimillion dollar judicial inquiry to find out something like that, and my friend should know that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, New Democrat Party returns filed with the Chief Electoral Officer for the past six years do not disclose even one contribution from an individual or corporation doing business in Saskatchewan. This leads one to question, where does the NDP hide these donations?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier assure this House today that neither he nor any member of his cabinet or caucus or their constituency associations or secret trust fund on their behalf have received a political donation from any corporation doing business in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, our party, the New Democratic Party, has complied in all respects with The Election Act of this province and always have, always have, and will continue to do that. But in light of the issue that has been raised by the opposition, that they've been harping upon, we have said to them, we've got The Election Act in front of us right now. Let's work together to toughen it up. Let's work together to clarify it so that there can't be this kind of dispute down the line.

Now I see, Mr. Speaker, in their news release today, they reject these amendments. Well I'm really sorry about that. We have the opportunity here to clarify what the law is in this area, and they refuse to go along with it. They refuse to even discuss it, as I understand their amendment. That's not acceptable. We're going to have to go ahead without their consent. And we regret that because we had a good consultation process around this Act, and I'm sorry that that can't continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with this House an ad titled: "Lifetime Membership" which appears in the latest edition of *The Commonwealth*, a New Democratic Party magazine. And this ad states, and I quote:

The lifetime membership program's goal is to establish a

permanent election fund for the Saskatchewan New Democrats. Launched in 1988, all funds collected through the lifetime program are placed in a capital fund which is reserved exclusively for election purposes.

Will the minister in charge of Post-Secondary Education explain how this fund differs from the secret fund established by the Conservative Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order! All members of the House will come to order on both sides of the House. Order. Now I was able to hear the question being put, and because of noise coming from government side I am unable to hear the minister begin his response.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, how little they know of what they're talking. The fact of the matter is that all of those lifetime contributions have been reported. They're all tax creditable. They've all been tax credited. They're one of the donations clearly by law required to be disclosed and are disclosed. People get tax credits for them, the names are published in Ottawa, and all that information is available. So the member just simply doesn't know what he is talking about, Mr. Speaker.

Now you'd think — you'd think — that their prize acquisition from Wood River would know something like that, considering he was once over on this side and should know that, but no doubt he's simply forgotten that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, this controversy will continue until there is an independent body that does a total review. The crux of this controversial issue, the crux of this controversial issue involving The Election Act, revolves around disclosure and the fact that political parties, namely the New Democrats and Conservatives, have contravened the Act. They have clearly done so by not disclosing the names of individuals or corporations making political donations to private funds.

In the case of *The Commonwealth* expansion fund, the ad clearly gives potential contributors the option of remaining anonymous. Does the minister agree that this is a clear and open contravention of The Election Act?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, Mr. Speaker, I clearly do not agree. I mean that's even more foolish than the question that preceded it.

The Commonwealth is a newspaper which is published in Regina and circulated across Saskatchewan. *The Commonwealth* expansion fund is a fund that has to do with the expansion of *The Commonwealth* newspaper. It's got beans all to do with elections, beans all to do with the funding of an election party.

Wake up and smell the roses and work with us in revisions to the Bill 92, which is before the House, to make sure that these

rules are clear so that future generations aren't subjected to the spectacle that we're putting on for them this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Maintenance

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring to the attention of this House today a copy of a letter that further demonstrates the state of Saskatchewan's highway system. This letter, addressed to the Minister of Highways from Mike Boychuk, explains how on four separate occasions — four over the past year — the gas tank in his vehicle has either been punctured or ripped open while travelling on Highway 310 from Ituna to Fort Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Speaker, Mike Boychuk feels that he should be reimbursed for the \$270 in total damage to his vehicle. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present the Minister of Highways with this bill on behalf of Mr. Boychuk and ask the minister if he plans to issue a cheque or pay by cash?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I want to thank the member opposite for the question, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned earlier to the media and to the member on several occasions, is that our highways in Saskatchewan have a difficulty in spring. There is no question about that.

It's a lot like the farmer's field this spring. He couldn't get on it when he wanted to. It was muddy. We had some problems with roads — breakups and that sort of thing. Of course the economic development in the province is increasing all the time in forestry, mining, and oil, and it certainly puts pressure on our roads.

When a road is marked, Mr. Speaker, when it's signed that there is a break in the road and somebody hits it, there is no compensation because the person can see that there is a hole there.

If for some reason that the road was broken or there's a hole there and it was not marked because it may have happened before the department could see it, then that person should certainly get a hold of the department and talk about the area where this happened and if in fact there were markings.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — I guess then what becomes clear is that the minister may as well just take and put up a sign at the end of . . . each end of every road in this province because they're all the same. They're all full of holes; they're all dangerous.

It's become abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, that our highways are in this kind of shape and are in fact dangerous. And this issue today evidents that. Given the fact that our highways are soon going to be dominated by tourists, safety becomes even a greater concern, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister explain at what point his government intends to address this serious condition? We've got school buses travelling on these roads, Mr. Speaker. We've got tourists. We've got safety at stake here of our young folks. How many tragedies will it take, Mr. Minister, before your government will act on this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well the member opposite knows, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada. We have 3 per cent of the population to attempt to pay for them. The federal government gives us absolutely no help; in fact they pull money from education and they pull money from social programs and they pull money from health care, and then we have to try and back-fill those programs, Mr. Speaker. And they take no responsibility of that.

They know that Saskatchewan has a large network, few dollars to operate, and we do a very good job with the circumstances that we're in. But I wonder if the member would join with me in talking to his federal counterparts so that there are not any reductions in transfer payments to the province so in fact we could put that money to roads.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

McDowell Report

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier or the Premier's designate. Mr. Premier, today is day 70 of the legislative session. That means that you and all the other NDP MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and Liberal MLAs have now taken full advantage of the \$4,400 pay increase. Only PC (Progressive Conservative) MLAs have given up this hike by simply not claiming our per diems for the first 28 days of this session. At the same time, the NDP and Liberal MLAs have been more than happy to collect their 70 per diems and a salary increase that comes into effect July 1.

Mr. Premier, or, Madam Minister, have you any second thoughts on this matter? Will you be following our example and giving up the pay hike?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Leader of the Third Party, it would be unlikely that we would follow the lead of the Conservative Party in any initiatives given the last 10 years of administration that we've all had ample opportunity to look at.

We have worked with the Leader of the Third Party, with the member of the opposition, in the Board of Internal Economy. He supports the initiatives to use the implementation date of July 1; two minutes later he walks out and changes his mind. I say, Mr. Speaker, this is a man without credibility on this or any other issue.

We have made our position clear. We are willing, all members on this side, to take a pay decrease over the period of this term of government, and we stand firmly by that commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, at the start of this session, your government said that spending cuts would start at the top. I think it's pretty hard for people to accept that you're getting a \$4,400 increase at the same time that hospitals are closing down, seniors are being thrown out of nursing homes. What happened to the commitment to start at the top, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Minister, at least the Liberals have made the commitment to pay back this money. On March 19, the member from Arm River told reporters as soon as the Liberals figure out what the difference is, they'll be stroking a cheque. The Liberals have now had three months to figure out what the difference is, and it is 4,400. Mr. Minister, have you received their cheque yet or will the Liberals be paying in cash? And will NDP MLAs be stroking a cheque as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, my answer is consistent with what has been said from this side of the House previously, and unlike the member, the Leader of the Third Party, we know where our position is. That is that we have shown leadership; cabinet has taken a 5 per cent reduction in salaries, which have been froze. We are taking a reduction in annual salaries over the term of this government. And we accept the fact that the McDowell commission implemented what we believe to be some very positive initiatives which we have supported.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Saskatchewan, we will put our credibility on the line over his, and the opposition as well, any day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporations Review

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) or his designate. Mr. Minister, your Crown corporation review just began last night and already there is a great deal of misinformation being spread by at least one special interest group in our province, and that's the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

Certainly unions and their members have every right to participate in this process, Mr. Minister, but I don't think we need the process hijacked by any special interest group. And I certainly don't think that the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) should be spreading misinformation and factual errors denouncing privatization.

Mr. Minister, what steps are you taking to correct the many inaccuracies contained in the brochure being distributed by the SFL? Don't you think that this type of misinformation campaign may hurt your own process?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member

opposite for raising this issue, because last night was exactly the perfect kind of meeting we had intended to do in setting up this public discussion about Crown corporations. At that meeting, there were a variety of people from many, many places, and a number of people participated.

I want to publicly thank the former candidate for the Conservative Party, Ansgar Tynning, the mayor of Kyle, who led one of the discussion groups. I want to thank one of the other candidates who ran in that nomination a number of years ago for also participating. It was a good, balanced discussion.

My understanding at the end of the evening, that everybody was satisfied that the process provided a good avenue for expressing their views about the future of public investment in Saskatchewan.

I think maybe if you would take the time to congratulate the people who have been setting this process up and thanking the people who've come to help plan the future of Saskatchewan, your comments would be better taken. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the same minister. Minister, we have no problem with the process. We didn't start this debate to discuss that part of it.

Because, Mr. Minister, the SFL claims that the Crowns will pay dividends of \$645 million to the government this year. They failed to point out that over half of this amount — \$350 million — is coming from the sale of Cameco shares, which is a very successful privatization that took place.

Another \$231 million is coming from the liquor and gaming revenues which have nothing to do whatsoever with this review. In fact the five Crown corporations under review paid only \$50 million a year in dividends on assets of 7.7 billion.

The SFL is also saying that privatization would lead to head offices leaving the province when this is clearly not the case and has been proven in the past, Mr. Minister. Wascana Energy, for example, was privatized and its head office has been maintained through legislation of this province.

Mr. Speaker, what steps — or Mr. Minister, what steps are you taking to correct these inaccurate statements by the SFL? Are the people that are running the public meetings taking steps to ensure that misstatements and misinformation are corrected and that correct information is given to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the fact that the members opposite have a dislike for the labour movement is no surprise and it's not new information today. The fact that they would publicly restrict the freedom of speech in print maybe shouldn't be surprising either, but it is a bit surprising to me that the members opposite would take the time to challenge other organizations who have points of view at a public discussion

that the public is invited to participate in.

Mr. Speaker, the reason, the reason this discussion was set up in such a way that there were round table discussions where everybody could sit . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now as all hon. members in the House will recognize, the minister is not located all that far from the Speaker, but the Speaker is having difficulty hearing because there are members from both sides . . . Order. There are members from both sides of the House shouting across the floor.

I'll ask all members to come to order and allow the minister to finish his answer. Order!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the reason that the meetings were set up in such a fashion, to avoid the kind of division that the member opposite would promote where people would take extreme points of view and shout at each other for seven days and seven nights. We set up discussion groups where people could rationally challenge each other on their points of view and at the end of the evening report to each other.

I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that all of the participants at that meeting did that with a discipline and a success that everybody that attended would attest to, and I thank the people there for their cooperation and I wish the members opposite would come onside.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital Funding

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, the sorry tale that's taking place out in Fort Qu'Appelle because of this government's neglect is growing more troublesome by the day.

Mr. Speaker, because of this government's under-funding, the board of the Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital is now suing the local health district. Mr. Speaker, the health district was forced to break an agreement with the hospital board because of a lack of funding.

Now the whole thing is headed to court and we see the Health minister refusing to take any responsibility. Can the minister tell us what he is now prepared to do to ensure adequate funding is restored to the Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital so this whole sorry mess can perhaps be cleared up?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, it's not appropriate for me or for this House to comment on legal action that has been initiated with respect to this matter.

It had been my hope that the matter would be resolved between the two parties. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that indeed this would be the most beneficial and satisfying way to resolve the

matter, would be for the two parties to do it. And I think that's how you normally get the best solution to a problem, is for those two parties to sit down. And I'm satisfied and confident, Mr. Speaker, that these parties, acting reasonably and in good faith, will ultimately resolve their differences.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, had the minister met with those people in good faith, perhaps they would not have had to go to court.

For 70 days now, we've heard three lines from this government. Number one, it's the federal government's fault for their under-funding of the system. Answer number two, the health system isn't under-funded because we're back-filling. Answer number three, it's not their fault the health care system is falling apart; talk to the district health boards. Those are the three answers we've gotten for 70 days now, Mr. Speaker.

And the result is — this minister and his government abdicating its responsibility — is the trouble we see occurring in Fort Qu'Appelle and throughout much of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, this government talks about local involvement in the process, yet we know these district boards have no say. The minister continues to pull all the strings.

So I'll ask again. When will the minister begin to live up to his responsibility and do something to clean up the situations he's created, such as the one we see brewing in Fort Qu'Appelle? Will you accept the offer to meet with the hospital board to discuss the matter? Can you at least do that much? I realize that there is a court process perhaps in the offing, but perhaps it can be fended off by a meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion that a minister of the Crown would meet one of two parties to a court action in order to try to resolve it is indicative of really a lack of understanding on the part of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that although the district faces a tight financial circumstance, the district actually received a funding increase this year; whereas if the federal cut had been passed on to the district it would have received a very large decrease, Mr. Speaker, almost \$200,000.

But I also remind the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that the district has three hospitals within its borders, and the district has to come up with a fair and rational way to allocate its funding between those three hospitals. The member wishes to favour one of those hospitals out of the three.

This is a matter for the district and the community to resolve, Mr. Speaker. The member's intervention will not be helpful in that process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Information Computer Network

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the end of this month, this NDP government is expected to sign a contract worth at least \$70 million for the development of a health information computer network. Under questioning in this House, the Minister of Health has stated that this system will result in increased efficiencies, saving Saskatchewan taxpayers up to \$50 million per year. Obviously some form of study would have had to have been done to come to this conclusion.

Will the minister table the study or some documentation that shows how his government arrived at this \$50 million figure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the member says an agreement is going to be signed by a certain date, Mr. Speaker. The member might want to enlighten the House a little bit more about the nature of the agreement and exactly when it's going to be signed, because I'm not familiar with the agreement that the member is talking about.

But I can tell the member and the House, Mr. Speaker, that if there is any agreement arrived at in due course with respect to a computer network, it will not be a unilateral decision of the province. It will be a decision of the province and the district health boards, and it will also be a system that the district health boards will be willing to help finance, Mr. Speaker. It won't be an expenditure by the government alone.

So I say to the member, Mr. Speaker, if he is saying to the district health boards that they are not entitled to enter into an agreement to share information — which information, by the way, would include information pertaining to rural patients who want to get quicker access to specialists in the cities — then the member can say so, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest concerns I'm hearing about this computer network is whether it's worth developing a system that may well be outdated by the time it's finally up and running. And we're talking about at least \$70 million that will not be spent to provide care for our sick and our elderly, but rather to keep their records. As Judy Junor of the Saskatchewan nurses' union states, and I quote, "In the end, it's people that help people get well."

Mr. Speaker, there are many questions that deserve answers, such as, how much will it cost districts to train personnel and operate this system on a full-time basis? If the minister has nothing to hide, will he table in this House today all documents relating to development of this system?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member, there will be no unilateral decision made with respect to this issue, by the Department of Health or the Government of Saskatchewan. If there is some development with respect to computer technology and sharing information between the districts, the districts will be a party to that, Mr. Speaker. And if

there is to be an announcement, an announcement will be made in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 17 — Political Donations

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I have some remarks that I'd like to make with respect to the motion which I will be moving following the conclusion of my comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a debate that I wish we didn't have to really have in this House. When I gave my first speech in this Assembly those many weeks ago, I spoke about the cynicism the public feels about politics and their elected officials. I spoke how that cynicism sometimes made me wonder why the heck I wanted to sit here as a member. Because of the actions of a few, we're all painted with the same brush of mistrust.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of both the governing party and the third party have done nothing to lessen this mistrustful view. Mr. Speaker, for the last week we've been asking the members of this House to simply follow the law as it exists on the books. The government has tried to turn the argument into one of changing the present law to ensure there's more disclosure, more accountability, when it comes to political donations and how parties disclose those donations.

Mr. Speaker, that's fine. If there are certain aspects of the present law that needed to be strengthened, then let's do it. But what's perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, is that the current law exists. Both the NDP and Conservatives have broken the law. There's no room for discussion here. They've broken the law — the law that the current Premier himself drafted as attorney general back in the 1970s. This is not a matter of strengthening the law, Mr. Speaker, but simply one of following it.

And the other two parties have not done so and they're trying to hide that fact. It's easy to see why, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about millions and millions of dollars — money where there's no disclosure. A secret stash the parties pull out when the need arises.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education calls our interpretation of the Act bizarre. Mr. Speaker, he knows full well it's not bizarre. If he reads the current Act, it's spelled out for him in black and white. I'll go through it slowly for him so he can understand it. Section 207 reads:

all moneys provided by any person, for the use of a registered party, whether as a gift, contribution, loan, advance, deposit or otherwise, shall be paid on his own behalf, out of moneys to which he is beneficially entitled, to a registered agent of the party.

Section (b) goes on to state and I'll quote that section:

no payment shall be made by or on behalf of a registered party other than . . . through a registered agent of the party.

Mr. Speaker, this section prohibits the payment of political contributions to a trust or any other agency created to receive them on behalf of a registered party. Only the registered agent can receive those funds, and only a registered agent can make payment by or on behalf of a registered party.

Mr. Speaker, the section further requires that donations be the donor's own money. This prevents the real donor from hiding behind another. Section 219 permits a donor to use an agent for this purpose, but specifically requires that:

. . . the agent shall disclose the identity of his principal to the business manager or to the registered agent to whom the gift, (or) contribution . . . is made . . .

If this disclosure is not made, Mr. Speaker, the donation "is deemed to be received from an anonymous donor." Therefore donations made to a trust for the use of a political party, whether for use now or later, are made contrary to section 207(2) of The Election Act as it exists today.

That section also states:

Every person who provides any money in violation of clause (1)(a) or . . . makes any payment in violation of clause (1)(b) is guilty of an offence against this Act.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, any person who knowingly is party to, or acquiesces in, or assents to a scheme to make donations contrary to these requirements would also be guilty as a party to this offence. That's in section 226, and that seems very clear to me, and it should be to the hon. members opposite. It's right there on paper, and they can't dispute that.

To go on, Mr. Speaker, in section 210(2)(a) it states a return to the Chief Electoral Officer must set out:

the amount of money and the commercial value of goods and services provided in the fiscal year for the use of the party, by way of loan, advance . . . contribution or gift.

Mr. Speaker, the requirement is not that the disclosure be made in the year in which the funds are used but that it set out contributions provided in the fiscal year on the report, used or not. Obviously leaving parties with flexibility to disclose contributions only when it got around to using them would defeat the intention of the Act. And, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely what our current Premier said parties must not do when he introduced this two decades ago.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to take the arguments of the other parties at face value, we'd have to believe the reporting requirements under section 210 allow for schemes such as trust funds or similar fund-raising agencies to be used by political parties. Clearly this was not the intention of the Act. The Premier did not think so back in the 1970s, and we don't think so now.

Mr. Speaker, not only has the spirit of this Act been

contravened through the secret trust funds set up by the other two parties, we continue to contend that the law itself has been broken. Having ignored these provisions of the Act, those parties now face the problem of what to do with this ill-gotten cash. We maintain that cash held in trust cannot be lawfully used until all donors have been fully disclosed as set out in the Act.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, section 219 permits donations to be made by agents. Huge sums have been donated to trusts which are holding monies for the use of political parties in our province. Mr. Speaker, either the trusts are the political parties in questions and therefore the party is in breach of the Act for not disclosing the donations — either that, or the trusts are agents of the contributors, and if they are agents as such then upon turning the funds over to the registered party, and again I quote the Act, Mr. Speaker:

the agent shall disclose the identity of his principal to the business manager or to the registered agent to whom the gift, (or) contribution . . . is made, and no business manager or registered agent shall accept the gift, (or) contribution . . . unless the identity of the principal is made known at the same time . . . the gift, (or) contribution . . . is given to the business manager or to the registered agent.

That's section . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — With leave, to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce an old friend, a colleague from my school board days, a mentor, and a former servant of this legislature, one member for the Rosetown constituency, Allan Stevens, who's behind the bar here. And I want to welcome him to the Assembly and ask members to join me in thanking him for all the work he's done for the province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 17 — Political Donations (continued)

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't start all over again right from the beginning. I just finished quoting section 219, clause 2, Mr. Speaker. Again it's in black and white. I don't see room for interpretation here. It's very simply stated for the members opposite and for all to read.

And as I pointed out, section 219 provides that if the contributor is not identified as required, the contribution is deemed to be received from an anonymous donor. That, in turn,

brings into play section 221 which states that any money not properly reported cannot be used and must immediately be reported to the Chief Electoral Officer— “and forward the amount with the report to the Chief Electoral Officer”.

Mr. Speaker, obviously this is a serious situation for all political parties that have been using trust funds or other agencies as fund-raising vehicles. All the money that has been paid into the registered parties without identification of the contributors must now be turned over to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we maintain that all money remaining in the trusts or agencies can only be used by the political parties in question at such time as there is a full disclosure of the donors, as required by the Act. Otherwise it too would have to be turned over to the Chief Electoral Officer, or else I presume these monies could be returned to the donors or turned over to charity.

Mr. Speaker, the problems we are now facing are not the fault of The Election Act as it now stands. As I've stated to the minister, there's absolutely nothing wrong with the law. The only thing wrong here is that we have a couple of political parties in Saskatchewan that don't feel a need to follow the law.

This might have worked well for both of them when they were the only parties on the scene, and both benefited from the other's silence. However, Mr. Speaker, the jig is up. Those parties have broken the law very clearly, Mr. Speaker. This is not simply an interpretation, as the Minister of Post-Secondary Education infers. No, this is a fact. Read the Act.

But if members on the other side or in the third party disagree with this fact, I invite them to rise today and tell us how I've misread the Act. Tell me which of these clauses I've explained to members today does not point to the fact the secret funds set up by the other two parties does not contravene the law. Read those sections. Tell us how these secret funds don't try to skirt the very clear intention of the Act, written by the current Premier when he was attorney general for Saskatchewan.

I encourage them to get up and tell the people of Saskatchewan they've not only lived up to the Act in spirit, they followed the law to the letter. I want them to get up and give me, give our caucus, and give the people of Saskatchewan, a clear indication of their so-called interpretation of The Election Act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I doubt very highly the members of those two parties will. We're now treated to the unpleasant sight of those two parties, sworn enemies we're supposed to believe, trying to cover each other's tracks. Because members of those parties know they are wrong about this. They know they haven't followed the law. For all their blustering, they know that.

Mr. Speaker, we as legislators, as members of this House, pass laws each and every day and we expect the citizens of the province to follow those laws. We may not always agree with the laws passed in this Assembly, but we do follow them none the less. Is it too much to ask that the parties who are represented in this House do the same? Is that asking too much?

Is it too much to ask that instead of finding new and inventive ways to get around laws set out by this House, that those parties instead just follow the laws both in spirit and in fact? Is it too much to ask that we at least show the people of Saskatchewan that much respect? Because if that's too much to ask from the members of the other parties in this House, I doubt very highly if they deserve their designation as hon. members.

Mr. Speaker, laws have been broken here. We're certain of that. Members of the other parties are unwilling or unable to admit this clear fact. That's why we need an independent inquiry to look into this matter. We have to get to the bottom of this seedy and sordid mess that the other parties have created in this case.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent on all of us to ensure we leave this institution higher in public opinion than when we got here. The reputation of this place has taken a real beating over the last few years. Let's try to begin to reverse that by coming clean with this issue. Let's refer the matter to an inquiry. Let's get an independent interpretation of the law that's on the books right now. Let's not argue back and forth. Let's get an independent opinion and an interpretation. Let's find out if the parties broke that law. We feel they did. We're certain of it in fact. Now let's get to the bottom of this so the healing process between the people and their elected representatives can begin again from the beginning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

I would now move:

That this Assembly call upon the government and particularly the Minister of Justice to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that an order in council be approved appointing a member of either the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal or Her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench for Saskatchewan — such member to be selected by the Chief Justice of Saskatchewan — to act as commissioner for a commission of inquiry to inquire into and report on the fund-raising and closely related activities of the registered political parties of Saskatchewan, together with any informally connected or informally related organizations which have assisted the registered political parties in such activities during the years 1974 through to and including the present; and further, that the terms of reference for the commission of inquiry should be as follows:

Terms of Reference

The commission of inquiry will have responsibility and authority to inquire into and report on:

- (a) all aspects of the conduct of the registered political parties of Saskatchewan with respect to the raising of political contributions and the compliance, or otherwise, of such registered political parties with the provisions of The Election Act during the time frame commencing on January 1, 1974 and continuing until the conclusion of such inquiry;
- (b) without limiting the generality of (a), whether organizations such as non-profit corporations, directors

of trust funds, informal committees, or other entities, have been established and have operated during the said time frame with the effect of either:

(i) raising funds by way of gift, donation, loan, advance, deposit, or otherwise for the ultimate use by the registered political parties, transferring such funds to the said registered political parties, their candidates, their officials, their elected members of the Legislative Assembly; or

(ii) making payments by or on behalf of the said registered party other than by or through a registered agent of the party;

(c) without limiting the generality of either (a) or (b) above, any findings that the commissioner considers appropriate with respect to any indebtedness of registered political parties to the Chief Electoral Officer by virtue of the provisions of The Election Act.

(d) without limiting the generality of either (a), (b) or (c) above, any recommendations that the commissioner may consider appropriate concerning either the prosecution of individuals or organizations for statutory offences or civil proceedings for the recovery of funds which may be due and owing to the Chief Electoral Officer by virtue of the provisions of The Election Act or other civil proceedings as may be appropriate.

And further, that the commissioner be authorized to engage the services of such counsel, accountants, clerks, reporters, assistants, technical advisers, and other experts as are necessary or advisable to aid the commission in carrying out its responsibilities;

And further, that all political parties who have been registered under The Election Act during the period of the inquiry have standing at the commission of inquiry;

And further, that authorization be given for the payment of reasonable travel and sustenance expenses in accordance with the tariff of travel and sustenance expenses approved for employees of the public service, and that authorization also be given for the payment of the costs of the inquiry, including the expenses of inquiry counsel and counsel to the registered political parties with standing at the inquiry;

And further, that the Department of Justice be authorized to pay honoraria and expenses of the commission;

And further, that the terms of reference as set forth in this resolution be subject to amendment upon the recommendation of the jurist appointed as commissioner.

I so move, seconded by the member from Wood River.

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have but a few words today to add to what the Leader of the Official Opposition has already said on this particular subject. And of course, given how much has been in the news of late . . . and in fact more of what's not in the news, I think, is really what we're trying to highlight here.

I think one has to ask yourself, why is there a concern to start with? And why back, Mr. Speaker, in 1974 did then attorney general of the day, now Premier, bring in amendments to this Act, 1974? And I have a *Hansard*, number 2678, and I think it really sums it all up as the government's position when the amendments to the existing Act, the current Act, were brought forward. Let me quote to that *Hansard*, April 25, 1974:

Mr. Speaker, a word about the corporations and others. Corporations and organizations or associations that are formed for the purposes of soliciting and obtaining moneys for political parties must maintain a record of the names and addresses of each person making a contribution and the amount thereof. Before any such body may make a contribution of any major amount to a political party, that party must reveal the names and addresses of each person making the contribution to the body and the amount thereof. No contributions may be solicited or received from any individual or corporation, association or trade union outside of Canada.

Yes. The member across the way asks, am I quoting? I'm quoting from the now Premier, then attorney general in 1974, and why in fact these amendments were brought in to begin with. Well the person was the member from Riversdale.

And what's actually happening here, and why these amendments were needed back in 1974, we agree with them. We agreed with them back then; we agree with them today. And for the record, let me clearly state that we view nothing wrong with the existing Act in those sections.

In fact it was only in the last few days that the government feels that they must bring forward, in a very hurried fashion . . . and when you see the proposed House amendments on Bill 92, you will see that it was indeed in a hurried fashion because it was probably one of the poorest drafted pieces of a legislation probably to ever come forward in this House.

And what the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is all in the disclosure, not in who gets money from corporations or trade unions or individuals, but it's how it's disclosed.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think an article that came out in today's paper, by Dale Eisler, sort of set it all out as far as why we need disclosure. And there's actually a few quotes in here that are quite interesting. I'm going to quote out of this newspaper clipping today:

Like the Tories' trust, the Tommy Douglas House fund collected money but never revealed its donors in the past five years and the fund has transferred \$380,000 into party coffers and there is no public record of where one cent of that money had come from. In other words, the net effect

of the NDP's private fund is identical to the Tories.

So clearly the news media are at this point viewing this to be an improper way to have funds.

I'll quote on: "If people can make donations to political parties anonymously, especially when that party is in power (as the government is)" . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I'm sure, you know, the heckling is just great, and I'm sure you'll really want to join in and explain some of your actions. But for the meantime, why don't you sit back and be quiet and listen and actually learn what your . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Hon. members will come to order and allow the hon. member for Wood River to participate in the debate.

(1445)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The quote is:

If people can make donations to political parties anonymously, especially when that party is in power then there is potential for all kinds of abuse. How do we not know, for example, that some large donor isn't receiving preferential treatment from government? What about a company making a large donation after it has received a multi-million dollar contract from government?

And we could go on and on and on about some of the concerns that we would maybe view. And without going into the Act, I do know that section 210 sets out some of the organizations . . . well, it's individuals, corporations, societies, trade union, unincorporated organizations, associations, and other persons.

So let's just take one of these for an example, one that I just found rather interesting when I looked at the proposed House amendment and why this whole argument of disclosure in fact must go forward, must be dealt with in a judicial inquiry, because it's not being dealt with in an upfront manner with the House here today.

But when you look at the proposed House amendment, and I'm going to quote right from it — where are we? — 5(a): in the case of contribution, (i) constituency association . . . and then they talk about the names of the officers. I don't know why they have that in there — (ii) a corporation. Fine. Trust fund, fine.

Actually these are all in the present Act and fall under section 219 as agents, and we'll get into that in a moment.

But you would have to ask yourself why, if they really thought this amendment through and they thought that it really covered everything that needed to be covered here today, why were trade unions left out of the new, proposed amendment? And yet they're in section 210. Is there something about trade unions that shouldn't be disclosed?

Take a look, Mr. Speaker, at some of the labour laws that have

come through this House in the last couple of years. And this is the point that Dale Eisler makes in his column. If we don't have full disclosure, if we don't know who's cutting the large, and I'm talking about large, cheques — we're talking thousands and thousands of dollars — we then don't know who owes what to whom.

We don't know if in fact some trade unions want certain pieces of legislation. I'm not saying it did; I'm saying it could have happened. It may well have happened. I don't know that. But don't you think a judicial inquiry would uncover some of these things? Of course it would.

And when you see how other people in the media view this: "New PCs wrong in keeping a secret fund." The *Leader-Post* of a few days ago: "NDP also has its fund." Well then you can see where in fact the government, scrambling as they were, I don't think they had time to really clearly think out what should the next step be, because when I sit back and think of how they're responding, it's not smart politically and it's not upfront with the people of this province.

The best thing they could do is deal with . . . have a judicial inquiry come forward and clear the air. If in fact they're guilty, I expect the route that they would take is to try and ram through a piece of legislation such as Bill 92, The Election Act, and try and bring in some amendments whether the opposition were in favour of them or not, as the Premier has stated.

If they're innocent, what's the hurry? We're in the first year of this term. What's the hurry? Why not do it next session? I mean if you're innocent, do it next session. That's as simple as that. You have two, three years before this has to be dealt with. Unless of course what you want to really do is cover some tracks or make it all seem like we're all innocent or we're all guilty; that there was some little problem here.

There is no problem. There is no problem at all. In fact you can see what the Minister of Post-Secondary Education has been endeavouring to do, and that is to confuse the issue. And how are they confusing the issue? It says right here in a *Star-Phoenix* opinion piece: "Don't dither on disclosure." Should . . . I don't know if I . . .

Should Mitchell deliver on his promise, (It's a quote, Mr. Speaker) it will end the questionable practice of provincial parties laundering direct individual and corporate donations through federal wings to skirt provincial law on disclosing the source of donations.

And that's been their argument for a few days. The fact of the matter is, that isn't our position on this. They're trying to confuse the issue. There has never, to our knowledge, been a problem with what they disclosed federally. When people make a donation and they give it to a party so that it will run through the system so that they could receive a tax credit, that falls under the Canada Elections Act. And that has full public disclosure through our federal laws. And in fact if our provincial Chief Electoral Officer had concern, he can access those lists. Those are the lists that they're trying to confuse . . . that somebody's got secret funds. There's nothing secret about

it. Nothing at all.

The fact of the matter is we all do it the same. The problem is what we do provincially. Provincially, the Liberal Party when they receive a donation, give that information. We follow the Act as set out in section 219 of the present Act, and we follow it, and we disclose the names and the amounts to the Chief Electoral Officer, and those show up on our returns. Those show up on the returns . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they are anxious to get into the debate with the heckling. I can only hope they will.

So the problem is when in fact they have secret trust funds or Tommy Douglas Incorporated funds, secret bank accounts, or flush funds. What else do they have? The Conservatives had some . . . oh, PC metro fund, but they had safety deposit boxes. We have seen so many things that the public are just . . . they're sick and tired of it, Mr. Speaker. They want it cleared up, and there's only one way it's going to clear up.

I can assure you that this issue is going to be coming forward to this House for a long time to come. They may think they can cover it up by ramming something through in the last few days of session. I'm telling the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, as I told him in a meeting yesterday, bring it back in February. If everything is upfront, bring it back in February and we'll deal with it. You try and cover it up and you'll be here all throughout the next session. This isn't going away.

I'm just telling them once more, as I did yesterday: let this Act die on the order paper. And let the individuals who are in the position and the ability to deal with such things as party financing, whether or not the Act is being contravened, let them do their job. Call the judicial inquiry and let's clear the air. We welcome that. We welcome that. The members opposite have accused us of secret funds. We say there isn't, and we're more than willing to make that point to a judge or through a judicial inquiry.

The very fact, the very fact that on some occasions we have taken a rock and thrown it into the dark and heard some dogs barking, we knew full well that we were hitting the dogs. That's what was happening. They're guilty. They're guilty of trying to contravene the Act, firstly. Section 219 clearly states — as the Leader of the Official Opposition stated earlier — it clearly states that any monies . . .

In fact the entire Act . . . if you look at the entire Act, what is the purpose? If you want to talk in layman's language, what does the Act really try and do?

It's basically saying that any person or persons or corporations, trade unions and on and on that want to give money to a registered political party either by themselves or through another group, an agent, as the Act sets it out — agent being a trust fund, Tommy Douglas Incorporated — any time you're going to pass monies through to a registered political party, then we fall — and it's very simple — we fall under what the now Premier said when he was attorney general and brought in the Act in 1974: disclose it all. Disclose every bit of it.

The parties — the other two parties — have found a way to circumvent this by accepting large donations from corporations or trade unions or whatever, and they run them through their constituency associations to avoid reporting.

An Hon. Member: — Wrong.

Mr. McPherson: — Well I'm afraid it is. If you got something to say then when you're done . . .

An Hon. Member: — You're wrong.

Mr. McPherson: — When I'm done speaking, how about you get up and you explain it, because there's a bunch of you that have a lot to explain for . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's not our party. It's the people here. You and your secret funds. If you got something to say, get up and say it after this is over with.

The Speaker: — Order. I want to draw the attention of the hon. member to two items. One is the rule of this Assembly, rule 28, which requires that debate be directed through the Chair, and I want to remind the hon. member that it is fitting the respect required of debate in the House that all hon. members will direct their debate through the Chair.

I also want to draw the attention of the hon. member to section 481 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th Edition, which reads in part:

. . . it has been sanctioned by usage that a Member, while speaking, must not:

. . . impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member.

Order. And section 484 of the same edition, which again says in part:

. . . a member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.

And I will want to remind the hon. member that he will want to respect the traditions of respectful debate in the Assembly and to guide himself accordingly in his remarks to the House.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very, very good point. Because what this really is doing on our part is asking that an independent body take a look at this. Not to say that you definitely are or aren't guilty of whatever actions, but let somebody outside of this House determine whether it was done upfront or not.

All we can do is look at the facts before us, and the facts say that there is some very questionable practices. The facts state that there are contraventions, in our view, contraventions of The Election Act. We can clearly state out where and what parts of the Act were contravened. And thus because of the amount of money we're talking about, some \$7 million — \$7 million —

then we feel it is only right for the public good that this have the scrutiny and be moved to a judicial inquiry.

I don't believe the government has a way out of this. To say that what we're going to do is bring in amendments, especially these such poorly written amendments that in fact add nothing to the Bill . . . The Bill doesn't need anything. It's very clear. It needs people to follow it.

You can have speed limits all you want. If people refuse to follow them, what good are the speed limits? It won't help to have a new law come in and say, well let's adjust the speed limit. That won't help . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, but it won't help. It does nothing.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we've got to have an . . . outside of this Legislative Assembly, a judicial inquiry, an independent inquiry, to deal with some of the perceived problems.

And with that, with that, I'll close by saying later today, or at least it was going to be later today, Bill 92, The Election Act which we have been asking from the Minister of Post-Secondary Education . . . And yesterday in a meeting he did relay to me that they would consider letting it die on the order paper. I see now in the last minutes the Government House Leader making some deals that we won't be dealing with Bill No. 92.

(1500)

I don't know if that signals that it's gone all this session or in fact is it only gone for a few days while things cool down. I think you have a lot to answer for on this one. Also in agreement yesterday with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, he assured us in the meeting that in fact if there was new information come to light, that he would consider a judicial inquiry. Publicly he's saying something yet different to everyone else. But that's what he's telling us in meetings. And I'm going to hold him to it, Mr. Speaker.

As of today there's \$7 million that is questionable. And I think what has really come to light is the fact that it was the media that found these secret funds not so many days ago. Is that all?

An Hon. Member: — What secret fund?

Mr. McPherson: — Well the members across the way are saying, what secret funds, as though they've been out of the House and not following proceedings.

So I would like to send a copy of this across so that they can follow along: "New PCs wrong in keeping fund secret." That would be a secret fund. Just so you can slowly follow along. And "NDP also has its fund." Can we send copies across? Because they are having a desperate time with this issue.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure others would like to get into the debate and explain their actions.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is asking the government to appoint a commission

of inquiry into fund-raising of political parties, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to be blunt today. It is obvious to me what the Liberal opposition is trying to do. This has nothing to do with their desire to be more accountable or more transparent. This has everything to do with trying to redeem themselves as an opposition. Actually the third-party Conservatives, with only five members, have clearly outperformed the official opposition this session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — The Liberal opposition has been ineffective, unfocused, and have dipped to third place in the polls. And now they are trying to elevate their sagging performance by clearly a political move. Their concern is not for accountability or more transparency. If the Liberals had any knowledge of an illegal act, then there is an obligation on their part to go to the proper authorities, Mr. Speaker.

They have had two weeks to do this, but they have failed because they have produced no evidence. This tells me that they are on a witch-hunt for pure political reasons, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals are trying desperately to redeem their role of opposition. There is a proper, legal procedure which they have not activated because they have produced no facts.

We as a political party have met all the legal requirements of the Act, and we have disclosed everything required by the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer has the power to conduct an investigation under the present Act. Any information that the Liberals may have should go to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Traditionally, Mr. Speaker, any commission inquiry would only come after all legal avenues have been exhausted. Mr. Speaker, this motion completely ignores the Chief Electoral Officer and the judicial system that we are governed by. To implement this inquiry would cost the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars — all of this, Mr. Speaker, in the name of political gain.

I have a great deal more respect for the people of Saskatchewan and for this place where I sit as a representative.

This is my opinion. It is my opinion that they will through this . . . that the people of Saskatchewan will see through this political ruse. The people in my constituency have a great deal of political acumen, and they will see what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, I will not take up any more time of the Assembly because the motivations of this motion are so blatantly political. So, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Motion No. 1 — Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, just a few comments before we move on to debate other issues in the Assembly. The reason I'd like to make some comments to this motion that's before us, item no. 1, that demanding the government repeal the unfair construction tendering agreement — this motion that we have in front of us — is because of the fact, Mr. Speaker, there are many businesses across this province . . . and certainly the construction association have come out and have taken a definite stand and a view that this agreement is not fair.

This agreement, Mr. Speaker, does not treat the construction association fairly in the fact that you either have to be unionized or there's no point in putting forward a bid, especially on Crown tendering projects. And we've raised this issue on a number of occasions. We've raised the concern. We've brought it to the attention of the government. I realize as well that the Minister of Labour has indicated that there is presently some negotiations with the construction association to see if they can come to a compromise.

However, to date, Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to indicate that at the end of the day the construction association will be able to realize the fairness regarding tendering agreements entered into with Crown construction projects in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we as well have asked the government if they would even consider giving second reading to our Bill No. 19, and I think it's a Bill that would address some of the concerns that have been raised and certainly the concern that is raised by this motion. And our Bill is An Act to revoke the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

What we've said, Mr. Speaker, is this. That any contractor . . . or any tender that is let in this province should be let, and that every contractor should have the ability, or every construction company should have the ability, to tender on that project. And that a project . . . and a tender should be reviewed based on the lowest qualified bidder receiving the tender, whether or not they are unionized or non-unionized.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, you would find that people — even the average, ordinary person on the street — would say that's fair. We're not against unions. We're not against construction companies that are unionized. But what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, if indeed unionized contractors cannot compete, it must say something about the negotiations or the agreements they have with their unionized members.

I would feel, Mr. Speaker, that any contractor or any union member in this province should be able to stand up and hold their head high, feeling that they can compete with any non-unionized contractor and they can do the same quality job and have the same quality of workmanship.

So it would only be fair, Mr. Speaker, if we're talking about quality and if we're talking about equality in this province . . . We hear the word equality on many occasions used in terms of whether it's male or female gender in the workplace or other

working relationships, Mr. Speaker. Wouldn't it also be fair that we have . . . that non-unionized contractors have the same ability to bid on a contract, realizing that their contract or their tender or their bid is not going to be reviewed based on whether they have unionized employees working for them.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that in view of the fact of what we have seen, and the government's numbers even indicate, the fact that the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement process has cost this province, has cost the taxpayers of this province, some \$118 million last year alone — \$118 million, Mr. Speaker, which could have gone towards services in this province such as health care, or education. . . which would have given hospitals the ability to provide the services; which would have given health districts that ability, or even educational districts, which would not have put Scenic Valley in the position that they were in today . . . in this year, where they had to come to the government and say, well if you're going to cut our funding, then we're going to review how we provide education, and we feel we have found a mechanism whereby we can provide even a higher quality of education in fewer days.

And, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that we see the government losing money on this, maybe it's time the government really took a serious look at this Crown Construction Tendering Agreement — took a serious look at it. And I trust, Mr. Speaker, that in the deliberations taking place right now with the trades across this province, that the government is indeed going there with an open mind. And with an open mind, they're looking at this agreement and they are basically saying, okay, maybe we've made a mistake here. Maybe there is room to move, and maybe we need to look very closely at how we let tenders and the fact that if we're going to create an equal working atmosphere in this province, that indeed the tenders are open to anyone and everyone.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I find that this motion is certainly a motion worth debating. I would also feel we could establish more by indeed moving ahead and debating and entering into agreement to move second reading of An Act to revoke the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, Bill No. 19. And I would ask the government if they would give consideration, even later this day, to moving towards that.

However, Mr. Speaker, I've think I brought forward the points as to why we feel this is a good motion, why we feel Bill No. 19 is a good motion. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, to allow anybody else to take the opportunity to speak on this issue, I will take my place.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of this debate.

Debate adjourned.

Motion No. 3 — Wildlife Damage Compensation

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I feel it's imperative that I raise a few concerns regarding this motion and bring to the floor of this Assembly the fact that

there are many people across this province, and certainly a number of farmers in my constituency, in fact a large number of producers in the constituency of Moosomin, Souris-Cannington, certainly up into the Melville area, and the Yorkton-Kamsack area, who were hit very dramatically by weather conditions last fall that didn't allow them to harvest all of their crops. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, and because of the heavy snow conditions, found themselves facing a very serious depredation problem with regard to wildlife damage in the crops.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform the Assembly . . . to realize that while the Minister of the Environment was suggesting about a month and a half ago that the government really didn't have a program in place to address compensation loss, and while the government wasn't prepared to really put one in place to address the loss, and while the minister was suggesting that that loss probably won't be that large at the end of the day because the producers will eventually get out to harvest their crops, I want to relate, Mr. Speaker, the fact that yes, I've talked to many producers this spring who were able to get out onto their land, were able to harvest what was left of the crop. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this, that most producers found that the yield that they received on crop that had wintered over was substantially lower than what they had harvested last fall.

(1515)

And, Mr. Speaker, we can say, well they had a crop and they got some crop off and certainly it's some money in their pockets at the end of the day, and will go at least some distance to covering the expenses of putting that crop in the ground last year.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, with that even a 5 bushel yield loss in relation to where the prices of grains are today, to most producers, Mr. Speaker, who are struggling in many cases just to make ends meet and trying to keep themselves afloat after the difficulties of the 1980s with the dry years and the low grain prices, any loss, Mr. Speaker, that producers experience even this year, as we've seen this past spring, is a major set-back and a major burden to most producers.

So I feel, and my caucus and my caucus colleagues feel, that it would be appropriate, most appropriate, for the government to have taken a serious look at the economic impact and the economic loss that has been incurred and that producers across the south-east area of the province have felt as a result of wildlife damage.

And I realize, Mr. Speaker, this has been an issue that has been ongoing. And this is an issue that can vary from year to year. Maybe this fall will be an excellent fall. We trust that we will have a longer, extended fall compared to last year, and that indeed the crops will be harvested and will be in the bin.

You have two things: with the high price of grain, producers would like to get a benefit; secondly, if the grain is in the bin, then the wildlife can't damage it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's not only imperative that we address the shortfall this year. And while I realize the government has basically said it won't, I hope the government doesn't just push this underneath the rug or underneath the back burner and say, well it's gone away; we don't have to worry about it because we're into a new year and we're hoping that we don't have a problem.

What if, Mr. Speaker, what if we have another problem next fall and next winter such as we've had this past winter. What if that happens, Mr. Speaker? What is being done? And that's why I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly important that we raise this issue, this concern, and we continue to bring it to the government's attention, that it is their responsibility to address the issue and to begin today to look at a long-term program that will put in place, compensation that producers could be . . .

And what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is not something that just hands over funds to a producer, but basically a program that producers can be involved in; that they can involve themselves to the level of participation that they would like to be involved in to protect themselves. Like I'm saying an insurance policy that is over and above crop insurance as we know it today.

And I suggest that, Mr. Speaker; I suggest it's based on the idea of a spot-loss program, such as we have with hail. If you have hail damage and the crop insurance program — if you want to carry it along with crop insurance — crop insurance pays you for that hail damage. And the unfortunate part with crop insurance though, Mr. Speaker, is if that hail damage happens to drop the production level below your protected level, you don't get any more if you've already been paid under the spot-loss hail.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at big game damage, those areas of loss — if you do a spot-loss program — would be addressed. And it wouldn't mean that you have to address a whole quarter section. There may be a total of five acres that have been lost at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker.

That producer, by getting involved, would receive the compensation that would be fair, for the fact, Mr. Speaker, that he has been looking after, if you will, the Queen's livestock, or the Crown livestock, the wildlife that everyone else enjoys.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, it is certainly important that members of this Assembly continue to raise these concerns, as they are raised with us, so that people out in rural Saskatchewan do not feel that they have been forgotten about and that they have been left alone.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that I am in full agreement with this motion and I would ask the Minister of the Environment, the Environment and Resource Management, to work with his cabinet colleagues and work with the minister responsible for the Crop Insurance, to indeed put in place, or begin putting in place, a program that would address wildlife damage problems that may incur in the future, as we've seen them in the past.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am fully in support of this motion.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of this debate.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — To move yet another motion. With leave, I move we proceed to government orders.

Leave granted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Diana Milenkovic, with SaskTel; and on my right is Jim Brickwell, a policy analyst from the Department of Municipal Government.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Minister and officials. Minister, I know we've had some conversations about this issue, and I think you know some of the concerns that we certainly have.

Minister, we certainly approve of and appreciate the efforts that your department is making in terms of enhancing the safety that people feel throughout Saskatchewan and particularly in rural Saskatchewan. I guess what our concern is, is the . . . not only the short-term and the immediate implementation of this Bill, but also exactly where it's going. As we understand the system that's going to be implemented with the proposal under this legislation . . . is that what we're going to end up with is a number of components.

First of all, Madam Minister, would you mind putting on the record again, to bring us up to speed, is in terms of how you're going to implement this. And what I'm thinking of in particular is the steps that you would envisage taking from the proclamation of this legislation. Take us through until where you envisage the process to be fully implemented. And I'm thinking in particular of what you need to put call centres together, what you need for mapping, and things of that nature. What's the process in implementing this legislation?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, first of all, upon the passage of the legislation, we would put in place two advisory committees: the advisory committee on the development of the system and a technical advisory committee. There would be two levels. With their assistance and input and the input from other stakeholders, we would develop the regulations that would be

pursuant to the legislation. And relying on the advice of the advisory committees, we would continue to build on the 911 system as it's already established, fully enhanced, in several centres in Saskatchewan. And we would just work our way through the rolling out of the system as different communities and regions become ready at their end. And we would rely on the advice of the advisory committees in the design of the system and how it's eventually completed.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, you mentioned that you would go through this advisory process, the regulations, and then you would be staging or expanding, as I understood you to say, the 911 system that's currently in three major communities. Is that correct, that it would be an expansion of the existing 911 systems in our major centres?

(1530)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, not exactly. That isn't quite what I said. I said we've set up the advisory committees, and of course we would rely on the experience and expertise of those people who operate the fully enhanced systems that we have already, being Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and the regional area in the south-west where municipalities have gone together to organize their response system and fund the enhancement to the level that they feel they can afford. And then we also have North Battleford, Moose Jaw, Estevan, and Weyburn that have basic systems that are in place now.

So what we would do is look at the organization of those, and relying on their advice and paying attention to some of the other organizations which have gone on at the local level. They're not fully up to the status yet of the centres that I've mentioned, but there are some other regional initiatives. There are some other initiatives that have been spearheaded by health districts that are meant to operate within the boundaries of a particular health region. And we would, using the advice of the advisory committee, try to put all of these together in the best possible design for a comprehensive system for the province.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I don't want to put words in your mouth, although I probably will attempt to do that in terms of seeing where we're heading. As you're aware and you've mentioned, that some communities are operating with a basic system right now which I'm not sure the definition is, and I assume it's sort of just the fundamental call forwarding system that has 911 capability to bring it to a dispatcher that would do that without the mapping and the location display and things of that nature. Then we sort of get to enhanced and fully enhanced as we move up the ladder of sophistication that seems to be in place.

The fully enhanced system, as I understand it — using Prince Albert as the example; that's I think the example, only for example purposes, in the area that I'm from — would have the full enhanced service that would have not only the mapping that would be completed, that when an emergency call came forward there would be a trained technician answering that call, that individual would have the capability of staying on the line with the caller from which the emergency was located, and then trigger the appropriate responses from whatever segments of the

emergency response professionals that would be in place. That's a fully enhanced system. Are we agreeing on that basic definition?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well with an enhanced 911, the location of the caller's phone is displayed along with the phone number at the 911 centre. With basic 911, the location is not sent. Only the call line identification is sent, which may not be exactly the telephone . . . the actual phone number. Also the province-wide 911 service offers a single-button transfer to the appropriate emergency response agency, so the choice of three buttons versus the choice of 600 combinations or speed call numbers. And that is important in any wide-area 911 system that has many emergency responses.

And then there are the other factors. The degree of enhancement to which a community can move does rely on other factors, and we certainly don't deny that there is a cost of these. There are things like mapping, like street signing, like the kind of work and investment that's required to put together a fully enhanced response.

Now I hope that makes it clear. There definitely is a difference. There's a difference now in the level of the various systems that are in place, but our goal is to move to as fully an enhanced system as possible throughout the province in every centre.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, it seems to me in your description of the steps to the fully enhanced system — that the things that would be done at any level moving from basic to enhanced, which may not have the full EMT (emergency medical technician) technicians, to the fully enhanced that has all the rest of it — all of those things would build on previous steps; that there really would be very little wasted effort because mapping and identification of houses and streets and locations would be something that is a requirement further down the ladder, and it wouldn't be wasted effort.

So the costing of this thing, is that becoming the important . . . and time line to get to the fully enhanced system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it's always been . . . finances are always a factor of course, but that's the reason that we have made an investment in the mapping. And I've outlined these steps that would be necessary for a completely enhanced response, you know, being the street numbers, the mapping, those factors to which there is a cost.

But I think that's why we would rely on the advice of the advisory committee in the experience that they already have, and that's why I used the terms in the beginning, building on that. And of course there will be — and we have to face this — some parts of the province that are more remote and that are very sparsely populated where as, for instance, road signing and house numbering is simply not practical. And so we're aiming to find the best possible solution. There are many centres in the province that with the organization and investment at their level in the identification programs and so forth, would have the ability to fairly quickly move to a fully enhanced system.

Then there are others where there may have to be compromises.

So we hope to not waste any money. That's why we would, you know, use the advisory committee to build on the current experience and expand the system incrementally in that way.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, one of the things that we want to propose today as an amendment — and I don't know if you have a copy of it. It'll either be moved under my name or under my colleague's from Saltcoats — is a concern about the definition in the Act under the public safety answering point. It strikes me that the way you've defined that is pretty limiting in terms of really following through with the vision that I hear you articulating today in terms of where — I think we're in agreement — we all want to head.

And our concern is — very, very much so — is that if we do not articulate the true vision of where we're heading, is that we somehow will settle for something that isn't fully a 911 system in terms of where the people understand 911 to be, either because they've been watching television or they have experience with 911 in the major urban centres in Saskatchewan or elsewhere — 911 certainly comes to mean clearly something more than the basic system. And even to many, in many extents, the enhanced system, 911 in people's minds is pretty synonymous with the fully enhanced system. And if we're going to have that as an objective, I would hope that you would see your way clear to support that kind of amendment that clearly defines where we're heading in this regard.

Do you have any comments in terms of the direction, because I think I heard you saying that that's clearly where you want to arrive at?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to know that there are two parts to it. One is the computer system and the fully digitalized service that SaskTel now has which makes a 911 possible. With or without street addresses, there can be a provincial response.

But I think the purpose of the legislation is to provide a framework; then looking at the systems that are in place already and where we want to move to, which is as fully enhanced a service as possible to every individual line in the province, but knowing that to try to replicate the enhanced service in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, for instance, in very remote parts of the province, because of the difficulty in organizing the local response, is not realistic. That we would move out incrementally, with the cooperation of those communities who want to provide that service for themselves, to provide within that framework the most fully enhanced system, response system, that's possible.

And the number of . . . they're known as PSAPs, public safety answering points, that will exist once the system is complete, there's not a definition of that yet. We need to work our way through that with the help of the advisory committees.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I certainly understand that with the digital network that's now part of SaskTel's system, that the number of public safety answering points is pretty much academic because they would be transparent to an emergency

call. People wouldn't know if that answering point was in their own community or in Saskatoon or Regina or any other location. It would be virtually transparent.

And so the number of answering points probably has practical considerations over time that I'm sure — from your comments about the consultative committee that you are indicating that you will strike, or committees — that an appropriate design of the system in terms of how many answering points there are would be established both in consultation with SaskTel and with your committee that would establish what's the appropriate number.

My concern is much more of when we talk about a framework. And I realize this doesn't snap your fingers or wiggle your nose and instantly you have a 911 system. My concern is much more, is what kind of a system are we going to settle for and where are we . . . if we're building a framework, as you indicate, what is that framework going to look like? And I recognize that you're going to dress it up as you go through that consultative and planning process.

And it strikes me that it's critically important to the people of Saskatchewan so that they understand of where we're going very clearly; that to articulate that those answering points, whatever number there would be into the future, are clearly destined to be the fully enhanced answering points set out . . . that have all the services of the fully enhanced system. And I fail to understand why we can't make that objective clear in the legislation so that all the people of this province realize what we're all in agreement, of saying that everyone should have as much access to it as possible.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the key in the consideration of this proposed legislation, or the legislation that's before us, is that it is not limiting in any way. And there will be various levels of costs associated with providing a coordinated emergency response service in various centres.

Obviously in a larger city, where you can spread the costs, where a large municipality, for instance, has self-funded and can spread the costs of manning a 24-hour-a-day emergency centre — of putting in the hardware in the response centre and keeping that up to date and so forth — can be spread over a large number of people, this can be done.

But if we put in legislation, or incorporate into legislation, the premiss that no one will receive a response when they dial 911 until they can provide that level of sophistication in a response centre, we would be limiting the ability of a number of people in rural Saskatchewan and remotely . . . or sparsely populated and remote areas of the province from participating at all.

So we don't . . . we want to make as few compromises as possible but we don't want to limit the access of a response on 911 to places that are, communities that are, able to provide the absolutely fully enhanced service as we know it today. We need to move incrementally.

But within the framework that we have, what we anticipate is that everyone in the province will be able to get — whether

they're a resident in the province or passing through on a highway or wherever they are in the province — that they will get a response on 911. And from that we will work to have the highest level of emergency response in every single place that is practical and possible and that is affordable, because some of the costs are at the local level.

For the province to man . . . to pass a piece of legislation that would bind someone, I assume the province, into providing a fully enhanced response to every single individual line in the province no matter whether it's remote, northern, sparse, rural — whatever — is simply not practical for financial reasons.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I think we have to separate a little bit about what we mean here in terms of the response and what the 911 system offers in terms of the communication linkage.

For example, I understand that the response time for example, if we had the fully-enhanced 911 telephone digital system that's networked through SaskTel's system — and it indeed maps where that telephone call, emergency call, is coming from — that's part of your plan, to do the mapping, and even the enhanced system, without the fully enhanced — and as I understand it — then the screen opens up and then the three different calls that are appropriate to that community can be activated by a telephone operator, virtually.

So all of that work that you're proposing, I fully support. I think that that's all wonderful. What I'm saying is, is that can you tell me how much more it's going to take, once you do all of that technology and all of the mapping and all that stuff is going to be in SaskTel's network anyway?

(1545)

So that instead of it being simply a telephone operator who's trained to push one of three button choices that come up on the screen, that instead of that being the individual that sits on the answering part of that call, if you like, what is the difference in cost — surely it can't be very much — to have a fully trained emergency measures technician who can maintain a verbal contact with the individual at the other end of the line?

And so I want to separate that part, because the second part of it where I think maybe we're getting hung up on — I don't assume that the response coming from the village of Zenon Park, for example, would be exactly the same and as instantaneous as if the call came from College Avenue in Saskatoon. I understand that there is a whole difference in terms of what the physical limitations of what responses would be.

But I don't think it would make a whole lot of difference if the person on the other end of the line, when that screen came up and it said this is in Zenon Park and the nearest ambulance is in Tisdale or Nipawin, for example, and that the response time for that physical thing is 30 minutes . . . Maybe there's a response . . . a first responder in Zenon Park with a beeper that would be able to respond in 10 minutes.

I'm not suggesting that the helicopters and everything all descend at the same speed on College Avenue in Saskatoon as

on Main Street in Zenon Park, but surely the SaskTel component — the emergency measures technician and the online counselling — is even more important in my example of Zenon Park, because it's quite likely that the response time is going to be longer and that that verbal linkage between the person in the emergency and a trained person who could talk that person to some level of support would be even more important than if it is that instant response.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we're not at odds on this at all. There seems to be some impression by the members opposite, because of SaskTel's involvement in providing the software and the mechanics for the system, that emergency response calls are going to be taken by long-distance operators or someone who's not qualified. That's not the case.

The legislation provides a framework for emergency responses of the type that you describe and the type that is our vision to happen on a regional level. We don't know yet what the districts will be like. There's health districts right now that are organizing using the 310-5000 number. And in this case perhaps . . . Well I won't name a place, but there are several of them. So the health district is organized. When a person dials in these particular regions to which it applies, 310-5000, the person who answers is actually an EMT at the ambulance company. It isn't fully enhanced now to the extent that the location of the caller comes up on the line, but there is a facility in that system to maintain the connection and talk and give instructions, while perhaps it's not an ambulance response, maybe it's a fire response or first responder, or whatever is required.

And they're organizing the district; mapping out; locating where the EMT technicians are located; where there are trained first responders and how close they would be to the origin of the call. And these systems are being organized right now on a regional basis, on a health board basis.

And at first when I heard about it, I thought, oh, this sounds like it's going to complicate the 911 initiative. But the way it's being done, when they're ready, when the whole area is ready and organized, all they'll have to do, they won't have to change a thing except flip the 310-5000 number over to 911 and they will then be part of the provincial system that you could say is being added to the systems that are fully enhanced right now. And that's the way we see, as regions, municipalities, parts of the province, get their local response organized like they have in the south-west, a huge area there, as I'm sure you're aware, has organized themselves. And their system is now up and running and the initial reports are that they're very happy with it.

And then using the example I gave you of the health board, that's how we will incrementally increase the number of people and the sizes of the area that will be able to access a qualified response. What you're calling, I think, an enhanced response but a qualified response will not have, like, information operators working for SaskTel responding to the 911; they'll be trained people.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, I think that in large part we're very much agreeing on both the direction and what we want to see happen. And I hope that . . . and I want to just read the motion that we're going to propose, or the amendments that we're going to propose. And I think that what we've been saying all along is that we're very much in agreement and what we would like to have happen is that defined in the legislation, the public safety answering point definition changes to read as follows:

The 'public safety answering point' means a telephone answering point that receives emergency 911 telephone calls and provides an enhanced emergency response service that co-ordinates fire, police, and/or ambulance emergency calls with responses at the call centre by qualified professional personnel who will activate and direct the emergency response teams while maintaining on-line contact and counseling with the emergency caller to the conclusion of the emergency.

I think from your comments, you're very much in support of the concept of what we're trying to do here. We certainly believe that this is a step in the right direction and we think it's critically important that this amendment clearly defines where we're heading, and then everyone will work together very expeditiously from the very mechanisms that you outline to achieve the ends that I think we're all in agreement with.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm looking at the amendment, and of course this is our goal, to have as fully enhanced service as possible. But the province is not undertaking to provide that service to every citizen of the province. The province can't afford it. What we need is . . . the province is undertaking, through SaskTel, to provide the hardware and software to make a response when someone dials 911 practical, possible. Then, as has always been the case up until now, municipalities, health regions, geographic regions like in the south-west, consider the situation, consider what level of response they can provide within a reasonable time frame for responding and given the geographics of the area and so on. And then they make their contributions. They build their end of it, and then it gets all put together.

But if you said . . . if we agree to the amendment, we would then be . . . well one of two things would happen. We would be precluding a number of people in the province in sparsely populated, remote areas that just are not able to organize this level of response in their local area. We would be precluding them from being part of the system at all, or else we would be binding the province to provide it all, which we can't afford to do.

Or else we may look at one of the other alternatives, where the public safety answering point might be, as we've talked about, the RCMP through their radio enhancement. But we wouldn't want to include this as . . .

We wouldn't be able to support the amendment because we feel that it is then limiting by prescribing that definition. We need to have the system evolve so that people, communities, health districts, regions, can move up the level of their response as

they're able to organize it and afford it and as they watch examples of what other people are able to do. And we have to build the system that way. We don't want to have the legislation be other than a framework because it may limit the participation of some areas, and our vision is for it eventually to be province-wide to the highest possible standard.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, using your analogy of the framework, I guess what we're saying is, let's make sure the framework is for the completed building that we want to create. And let's not just settle for a framework of a basement when what we really wanted was a three-storey bungalow or something of that nature.

And I would remind the minister — and I'm sure you know — it strikes me that in the wording of your definition under section 8(5) for example, of an advisory committee, this is to advise the minister to advise and recommend on the development, implementation, and operation of a 911 system.

Surely having that clause in there, and the advisory committee that you mention quite often, and we think is quite appropriate to advise on the implementation, certainly in my mind would also include the staging of it and how much of the implementation of the fully enhanced 911 system would be appropriate to be implemented at any time or place. But I think it's really important that we're talking as if we're in agreement with the fully enhanced system as we define it, that it's important to have that as the framework.

That's the goal of where we're heading. That's the framework that you allude to all along. I understand that it can't be implemented instantaneously all across the province both for logistical and cost reasons. But surely we shouldn't be settling for shooting for anything less than that. And the advisory committee and the people that you work with, including SaskTel, would obviously have to work through the whole process of, at what stage and what level of implementation would happen at each different location as its situation would develop and evolve.

So I guess what I'm asking for is let's make sure that we're shooting for the whole building that we want. And I recognize that the committee and the minister and the planning process will have to reconcile the obvious limitations of cost and logistics.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we certainly . . . I agree with the member opposite. And in terms of the amendment that the official opposition has put forward with respect to the wording of the clause on the advisory committee, we would be able to support that change. And I'd like to go back to your . . . because we do intend to set up an advisory committee and that . . . well the two levels of advisory committees. We intend to solicit their advice and to listen to it, take it into account very seriously, because we need to use their expertise to build the system.

And so in coming back to the member's analogy of what the framework and what kind of a finished house you're going to have, if you're building your dream home, you may do the

framing, you know, put the roof on, put the siding on. But you may not finish the basement. You may not . . . you know you may compromise in some of the finishes in some of the rooms, hoping that later on when your ship comes in you'll put in the oak panelling that you're dreaming about.

But you start with the best framework that you possibly can, and then you build on it incrementally. And the expertise of the people on the advisory committee will help us to do that.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few more questions, Madam Minister. I'd like to go into the cost and the funding a wee bit on the 911 system. I believe — and I hope this number is right — that you've been quoted as saying that it's 11.3 million will be the cost of the basic 911 system. Is that right?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that's not quite accurate. I wouldn't want any of my comments on the economics of it to be misunderstood. We've estimated that SaskTel's cost of putting into place the communications hardware and software will be, over the life of the project, \$5.6 million. We've alluded to an amount of \$2.4 million that was set aside which has been partially used for developing the GIS, the geographic information system, which is the mapping.

And then we have referred as a possible . . . well not a possible option, a possible option for the 911. But we have committed \$3 million to the enhancement for the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) fleet net radios which they're upgrading too. And that would be useful in the event that the RCMP is seen to be one of the answering points as the framework evolves.

Then of course the other costs . . . and there are other costs. It's not cheap, and it's not free. And you can see by the analysis in the cities where they already have a fully enhanced system that there is a substantial municipal cost in developing their own local software, their own mapping system, and in manning those response centres with qualified people 24 hours a day.

So I wouldn't have a figure for, you know, really an aggregate of what the whole thing would cost if we had fully enhanced from border to border. And that's why it needs to be incremental, so we can work our way through it. But those are the costs, the upfront costs that we've identified as a government and as a Crown corporation service provider to this point.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd like to touch on, then go on one step further. And I think you maybe possibly just answered this. But municipalities, now your expectations of what they are expected to fund or what portion of this you would hope that they would pick up, did I understand you right that you're saying that only out in the areas is the part that the municipalities would pick up? The basic set-up would be set up by the funds you have explained already, originally.

Now are you expecting the municipalities themselves to pick up 100 per cent of whatever it costs out in their own areas? Is that what you were saying?

(1600)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, not exactly. What I mean to say is that we are not, as a province . . . I haven't made any promises and are not obligated to pick up the costs for organizing locally. And there's no suggestion that there will ever be any kind of an involuntary levy.

For example, in the Swift Current . . . in the south-west area where a number of municipalities . . . I don't remember how many; I think it's 80-some. Yes, about 80 municipalities, rural and urban, forming a fairly large geographic area have gone together cooperatively. And they have agreed to levy themselves or their subscribers a certain amount on each phone bill. And I think votes were conducted, and the potential subscribers to this new service agreed with this. They wanted it.

But there's no suggestion that there will be anything mandatory. And it's our vision that this system will evolve on a voluntary basis at the local level as different communities in parts of the province reach appropriate levels of readiness.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And you talked about the Swift Current model, and we've looked at that too. And I think those people are to be commended. They not only, I believe, levy an amount on the phone bill, but they've also gone out and they raised a lot of money. They didn't use taxpayers' money, but they actually went out, and organizations raised money. So I feel that area is really to be commended, and they've ended up with a very good program out there.

I think the only thing I was trying to get a feel for, and I guess maybe it's a hard question for you to answer, but I know municipalities, most that I've talked to, are very interested in this. But I think they would like to get a better feel about what it would cost them or what is expected of them. So I think that's what we're asking here.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think that as the advisory committee is established and as the . . . and of course we did rely heavily on the advice of an advisory committee of current users and stakeholders in the development of this legislation. It certainly didn't come out of a vacuum. And once it's passed and we re-establish the two advisory committees again, then they will be able to give advice and they will be able to clarify, looking at the examples that are already in place for municipalities who are interested, what the procedure might be, and give them some assistance in developing the system that would be the most practical and appropriate for their situation.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I just have a couple of quick questions. Just to summarize, am I to understand that . . . again thank you for taking the time, and welcome to your officials. But am I to understand that if there was an emergency, say a house fire in Ile-a-la-Crosse, that if some young child were to pick up the telephone and dial 911, that he would be automatically connected to a central answering service, and this central answering service would have the data information or the data bank to determine which people to call, which numbers to call, and therefore this would really help in terms of getting a

quick response? Is that a fair assessment of what's being proposed here?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, what the member describes is an accurate reflection of what it would do and there would be a response then at any time that there is someone available. If they have 24-hour service at the ambulance, the fire department, and they would have . . . they would be responsible — those communities, those municipalities — for organizing who would be responsible for the response and how it would be coordinated.

And in the North, some communities that have land lines already, like La Ronge, Pinehouse, Ile-a-la-Crosse, they can be served in the same way that southern communities can right now. Then there are Uranium City, Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, Stony Rapids, and others that use satellite or operate radio systems, like Key Lake or Collins Bay. That will require some further study as to how exactly they would fit into the system. But those communities that are served with land lines would be equivalent to the systems in the South right now.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. And that's just exactly my . . . you know, kind of leads to the next point. When you look at all the exploration that's happening in northern Saskatchewan, and some of the industry involved with forestry and natural gas, and the tourism possibilities that you'll see a lot of people in different areas that are out in the middle of nowhere that would want to have some kind of access to some kind of emergency support, so I'm certainly pleased to see that you are making an effort to address these deficiencies.

And the second part of the question, I guess, is there any dollars that you've set aside to try and get some of these northern communities who really lack a lot of infrastructure, to try and upgrade some of their system in terms of some of the emergency response teams that are needed to be in place to make sure that this 911 system is indeed effective and that they are able to respond to an emergency?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the member opposite for his question and comments. I'd like to point out that SaskTel has in very recent years, within the last five years, spent over \$30 million in northern Saskatchewan to bring the individual line service to as many communities as possible. And I submit that's probably an expenditure — an investment, I would say — that would not have been made by a company that was motivated strictly by the bottom line. So certainly we have those objectives.

I'm glad to hear the member's observations about all the economic activity that's happening in the North in terms of forestry and tourism and mining and all the activity that's there that creates the requirement for a good modern telecommunications system and emergency response system.

And I want to assure the member that there is work going on right now. It's expected that these technicalities will be worked out within the limit, if not before, of the five-year time frame that we're talking about to develop the whole system. So the system is designed to be inclusive of the North.

But as the member knows, the technology is changing so quickly. For instance, now with the satellite mobility, it's still quite expensive on an individual basis for the receiver and so on, but this is probably a wave of the future for the North where, as the technology gets better developed and as there are more subscribers, that the price will come down. So the possibilities for the North are really very exciting and we look forward to being part of those developments.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. And I'll just take the quick time here to thank you for your time.

Just a final point in essence that we are aware of the tremendous risks involved in northern Saskatchewan, being isolated and certainly a long ways from help. And I would just encourage you, Madam Minister, to look at the situation when we look on this coverage, is to really do a thorough assessment of some of the emergency response teams that you have in the fire department or health care. Because there are many communities that have a lot of deficiencies, and that a 911 system would not be of much value if you haven't got a response team. So it's really a two-way street in northern Saskatchewan. So I thank you once again.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move an amendment to:

Amend clause 2 of the Printed Bill by deleting clause (i) as being enacted therein and substituting the following:

“(i) ‘public safety answering point’ means a telephone answering point that receives emergency 911 telephone calls and provides an enhanced emergency response service that co-ordinates fire, police and/or ambulance emergency calls with responses at the call centre by qualified professional personnel who will activate and direct the emergency response teams while maintaining on-line contact and counseling with the emergency caller to the conclusion of the emergency;”.

Amendment negated on division.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 8

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to:

Amend clause 8 of the Printed Bill by deleting subsection (5) as being enacted therein and substituting the following:

“(5) The minister shall establish an advisory committee, which will include representatives from any organization or government requested to participate pursuant to subsection (2), to advise and recommend on the

development, implementation and operation of the Sask 911 system.”.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have, as indicated in the exchange earlier, we have considered the merits of the amendment that the members, the official opposition, has put forward. And while we don't believe that it adds a great deal because we have already taken some steps to make sure that the two advisory committees are in place, but on the other hand, we certainly don't object, and it reflects our intent. So we would be prepared to support this particular amendment to clause 8 that the official opposition has put forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

(1615)

Clause 13

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Chairman, as I indicated in our discussion earlier on that there are two other places where we would like to have the public safety answering point defined as we propose.

However in the interest in time, and facing the practical realities of what the response is going to be, I would just like to state for the record that we do object to the definition of the public safety answering point as defined in the legislation, and let that stand on the record.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clauses 14 and 15 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly I move that the Bill, Bill No. 43, be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Municipal Board
Vote 22**

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce her officials first.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Janice Stamatinos and Marilyn Turanich who serve the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And should I introduce everyone at this point?

On my right is Bill Reader, the deputy minister. Behind Mr. Reader is Ron Davis, assistant deputy minister. Behind me is Ron Styles, assistant deputy minister for housing. Larry Chaykowski is sitting on my left and one back. He is the director of finance and administration. And behind Larry is Ken Alecxex, who is the associate deputy minister of culture and recreation. I think that's got everybody.

Item 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the minister and her officials. Just a couple of questions in reference to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. In northern Saskatchewan the mandate of the board, it says the board approves municipal capital debt financing and local improvement initiatives.

Just a quick guesstimate as to what have been some of the projects or some of the loans that northern Saskatchewan communities have applied to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board for and what have their amounts been. Is it a significant amount and how does that process work?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we wouldn't have that sort of detail here today. The Saskatchewan Municipal Board operates in a somewhat autonomous, arm's length fashion and the provincial government sets the mandate. And then individual municipalities will refer matters like debentures, long-term loans, that sort of issue that comes before them in organizing their financial affairs and doing their long-range planning, building infrastructure and so forth . . . they will deal with the Municipal Board on an individual basis, municipality by municipality. And so what we would see in the annual report, for instance, would be an aggregate of those but not individual cases.

Mr. Belanger: — So I guess, quickly to understand, and correct me if I'm wrong, suppose a small northern village wanted to borrow \$100,000 for the construction of an outdoor rink, that they would then go through the appropriate motions locally and then they would advise the Municipal Board that they wished to do so, and the Municipal Board themselves can determine whether they're able to pay this money back, based on not only the income that they have but certainly their tax collections and also their ability to pay. Is that the correct assumption?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, yes, that's more or less correct. As a reeve of a local government myself, we had not a lot of relationship with the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, but on a couple of major, long-term projects, like the building of a new office building, for example, where the financing was spread over 10 years and perhaps some larger capital acquisitions for road construction and so forth. We would submit those for approval to the Municipal Board, and they would look at those factors that you describe to approve or not approve.

There is one thing I could add to the answer I gave before is that when the annual report of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board was tabled here in the legislature fairly recently, during this session, there is a schedule appended as part of the annual report which will give you, I believe, the detail for the sizes of the projects and the communities that had made application. That's contained in that report so that would be a source of information for you if you wanted details on certain, individual projects.

Mr. Belanger: — Have you got just basically a rate in terms of how many applications or how many grants or how many times that northern municipal governments, excluding Lac La Ronge and Creighton, may have come to the Municipal Board and requested financing of a long-term project? Which were approved, and which ones were not approved, and the basis of the non-approval projects as well, please.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that the total, whether it's . . . but it's broken down into different categories, for example, loans and debentures. There are totals for separate categories, so we wouldn't have a total for the North *per se*, but there would be just in the hundreds of applications from the whole province in an average year. And I'm told that the average number of applications originating from the North on an annual basis wouldn't be more than about five.

Mr. Belanger: — Am I to also assume correctly that these projects are simply for capital construction projects, that these aren't meant for any social development projects nor for economic development ideas?

(1630)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is correct. And obviously in his experience as a mayor of one of the major northern communities, he would know that this process is designed to apply only to capital projects. There's quite a range there. Like it would include such things . . . there would be infrastructure, different kinds of infrastructure, different kinds of equipment — could be buildings, could be equipment, could be community facilities like recreation facilities, that sort of thing. So there is a fairly wide range of infrastructure projects.

But the short answer is it is limited to capital, dollars that are used for capital of various kinds, not operating.

Mr. Belanger: — And my final question, in reference to the

Municipal Board, is in essence the issue about the board of examiners. Is that part of their responsibility to determine the classification of different administrators in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, no, the answer to the question is that these are different people. The people who hear assessment appeals, for example, or review applications for capital financing requirements would be different than the people that form the board of examiners for qualifications for administrators which, I think, is the question.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I apologize for directing that question to you. I just want to jump into the housing a bit here, and contrary to popular belief, I haven't got that many questions on housing for northern Saskatchewan.

I just noticed an article here in reference to . . . a local article in reference to FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) signing a housing deal between the Indian Affairs minister, Ron Irwin, and Diane Marleau, who's the minister responsible for CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), and it says that they are looking at a national on-reserve housing plan worth more than \$2.4 billion.

And I was just wondering, have you had much negotiations with FSIN on this type of initiative in terms of meeting or suggesting that perhaps on the Metis . . . or many of the northern communities and other communities throughout Saskatchewan that a similar effort should be made to try and address the severe chronic shortage of affordable, low-income housing for people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question as to whether we've had negotiations with the federal government on the FSIN with reference to the newspaper article of today, the member will know that this is an on-reserve project, and that housing on-reserve is 100 per cent a federal responsibility and always has been. That's been the tradition. So the short answer of whether we've had negotiations on that particular initiative is no. As a province, we wouldn't have a responsibility. We wouldn't be invited to the table, and we've not taken part in that.

With respect to the balance of your question about the needs for housing in the North and the role of the Metis, we have done the best we can in the face of the abdication by the federal government. They're basically vacating their role since 1993 in any kind of social housing except for some . . . one short-term initiatives.

We have done the best we can to develop some projects that will meet needs in the North, and that some of them have been in federal-provincial sharing programs that are being phased out now or are extended on an ad hoc basis which makes it very difficult to plan. Like even now on the extension of the RAP (regional assistance program) and the ERP (emergency repair program) and the remote housing initiative, they're telling us that it's for one year. So we're trying to maximize whatever sharing there can be or any development that we can do within that one-year time frame.

But when they do it on a . . . and when the federal government is in and out of it on an ad hoc basis, it makes it very difficult for us to plan ahead. And we certainly can't afford to back-fill the money that the federal government has taken out.

But the member opposite will be aware of some of the very interesting remote housing projects that fell under that category and got some federal assistance last year where we went . . . There was Cumberland and La Loche, where there were some self-built houses, and these were just excellent examples of the people in the community and the municipality itself working together.

Where in some cases the municipality, for instance, supplied the service land, the people who were going to be the future owners of the new homes helped each other. In Cumberland there were 11. I think in La Loche there were four, four or five. And the families worked together, provided the sweat equity, and so it was . . . And the province and the federal government both contributed capital. So it was a very cooperative effort, and the results were really fine, high quality dwellings. And we will continue to do whatever we can to meet the housing needs that we know are acute in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess the position I take on this whole matter is that while I'm certainly happy, I guess, that there is some effort being made to repair some of the existing housing stock in northern Saskatchewan, and certainly also pleased to see some of the self-build programs that you spoke about . . . have been put in place for Cumberland House and La Loche, I also know, as well as probably most of the officials, that there is still a chronic shortage of housing in northern Saskatchewan.

By your guestimates, are you able to indicate to me today the exact number of units that you may be short of when it comes to northern Saskatchewan communities?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we recognize that there is a need in the North. In addition to what I mentioned before about some of the housing that's been built in a cooperative way, there is an extensive repair program.

We have also adopted in recent years of moving some of our Sask Housing rental units from southern communities where there are vacancies, chronic vacancies, and we moved a number of homes into the North, recently up to La Loche. It seemed to be more . . . well it's been proven to be more economical to move an existing house than it is to build a new one. So if the house is in good shape and is vacant somewhere else, we've been doing that.

I'm not sure how many . . . Yes, the moving program is not really extensive yet, but we have moved about 80 units. And in response to the other question about the need, the waiting list in the North for the existing Sask Housing units is about 600. That's across all the communities in the North, so that is substantial, and we will continue to work to try and develop plans to meet those needs.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

And I must also commend your department officials for coming up with the amount of 600. And that certainly coincides with some of our studies and some of our findings as well in talking with various northern mayors and some local housing authorities.

I guess the tough part of this situation with the shortage of housing, it has a drastic social cost to the people of northern Saskatchewan, and more so the children and some of the families. What we're seeing is the overcrowding is certainly causing a great amount of health concern. The overcrowding is certainly causing a great amount of grief for many families and for many people.

And time and time again in recognizing some of the limitations that governments have, we find that the response from provincial departments is that your federal cousins and . . . had the federal government not cut back on housing, we would not be in this particular situation. And that really doesn't do a whole heck of lot for the people that are in drastic need of housing. La Loche is one good example of how the housing situation has just really negatively impacted not only the attitude of people but actually the challenge of raising a family in northern Saskatchewan.

Can you somehow commit to us today, Madam Minister, that you will undertake as minister responsible for housing in northern Saskatchewan some long-term plan to not only address the current needs, so they can address these moral issues that I think that we have to really get a handle on as government to try and come up with some process, some plan, some hope to try and give these people that need housing in northern Saskatchewan so that we can finally address this shortage of housing in many communities in the North?

And the second part of the equation of that is to also look at the situation of some of the working families where people do occupy housing. As you're probably aware, the banks don't deal in northern Saskatchewan. The banks don't look at northern Saskatchewan as a safe housing market. And on the few occasions when I actually did apply for a mortgage, the banks indicated to me that you would have to have at least 50 per cent down of the value of the mortgage. And even then you must be making a fair bit of change for the banks to look at dealing in northern Saskatchewan communities.

So I know that the banking industry really doesn't want to go into northern Saskatchewan. There's obviously something that we could also do in that regard as government.

And the third part of the problem is with accommodation . . . I'm sorry, with renovations to existing housing stock, particularly for the elders. There are some elders in many northern communities that are living in housing that you and I wouldn't live in. It's a shame to see that type of effort. And I'm certainly not trying to condemn the staff of Sask Housing. I think they're doing an admirable job in light of the fact that they've had limited income.

So I would encourage you through your own sources as minister to strongly lobby and to strongly persist in coming up

with solutions to these three particular problems.

And what you could do to even begin the process of understanding more completely some of the dynamics facing the housing problems in northern Saskatchewan is to consult at local housing authorities on more of a regular basis and giving them more control and more flexibility and more authority.

So in making that statement, Madam Minister, I would offer to you that we should propose a steady system of consultation with the mayors, consultation with the local housing authorities, and perhaps even a joint effort of travelling to Ottawa to try to impress the government and try to get the government to support some of the Saskatchewan initiatives. I feel that if the Saskatchewan government takes the initiative to address these problems in housing that indeed we could come up with a Saskatchewan way and a Saskatchewan solution.

So in reference to these points, I was just wondering if I can get some of your responses to them.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, first of all, with respect to the references the member makes especially to seniors living in substandard housing, if it is Sask Housing, if it is one of our rental units, and if he is aware of a unit that needs repairs or is substandard, then he should let us know immediately because we have spent . . . There is an extension of the RAP program. We have targeted I believe — I don't have the numbers here — but I believe it was about 40 per cent of the available money that is in the RAP program to the North. So that is a disproportionate share really, in terms of the number of people and the number of houses there, in recognition of that need because we know that houses do deteriorate more quickly in that environment. So we would invite you, if there is any substandard Sask Housing rental units that are existing, then please do make us aware of them.

Usually we are made aware because, as you know, one of the things that we have done there is we have devolved responsibility for the maintenance of the housing portfolio in the North to the local housing authorities. We've given them . . . they've taken that responsibility, and they've done it very well. So that's an improvement too, I think.

And we recognize that the situation is entirely different in the North. And believe me; we are meeting. We are working on trying to develop, you know, a policy framework for the North. Even if you don't have a lot of money to throw at it, it's certainly timely to try to plan for what you'd do if you had the resources — you know, what is the right thing to do and what are the priorities.

(1645)

And one of the priorities is that there are, because of the economic development in mining, in forestry, in tourism, in all of the areas that the member from Athabasca mentioned earlier, there is activity. And there are a number of people, families, and single people living in social housing units that actually could afford to build their own. And if we could create the atmosphere where there was a real housing market there . . .

And I understand what the member from Athabasca says because in order to have a housing market, you not only need to have a need for housing. You've got to have buyers. You've got to have sellers. You've got to have a way to provide infrastructure and service the land. You've got to have banks. You've got to have suppliers of building material. You've got to have access to insurance, and all of those things that constitute the elements of a housing market.

And if we could do something to create that kind of environment, where people who can afford to move out of rental housing and build their own, would then provide vacancies for some of those people, those 600 families that we talked about, that are on the waiting-lists.

So we certainly do recognize the importance of housing. We recognize that decent housing is a factor in health, in the general well-being, and that for every dollar that you don't spend on housing there are costs in social services and health and the justice system, and all of the other stresses that living in substandard and crowded conditions, such as family violence and alcoholism and all of those issues . . . we know and recognize that housing is a factor in all of those situations.

And certainly we heard it loud and clear when we established the Municipal Round Table and had our first meeting in La Ronge, about the end of January, I guess it was. And the northern leaders had done some very positive and good preparatory work for that meeting and left us with papers and presented their briefs. And certainly housing and all of the issues that we're exchanging some views on at this moment were very high on their agenda, and we will work hard to try and meet some of those needs.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I certainly appreciate again the effort that you're taking and certainly your department, in reference to the housing situation in northern Saskatchewan. And as we all know, I'll certainly never be happy as an MLA unless we have those housing needs met.

And specifically, I will look at . . . again going back to some of these senior citizens in northern Saskatchewan. And I can't today provide you with a list of the people that may need renovations to their homes. And many of these are elders.

And taking an example . . . I do have a few examples for you today. One of them in particular is Pat Morin, who is a Metis veteran from Ile-a-la-Crosse. And Mr. Morin of course lives on a very limited income from, I think it's his pension. And he says he barely makes . . . and I quote:

I barely make ends meet with my old age pension. The bills I have every month are power bill, water bill, phone bill, cable bill, loan payments (for renovations that he had from 10 years ago), a truck payment.

He also has some grandchildren that he looks after as well. And what he wants to do, and I quote:

. . . is remove the siding, add a 2-inch wall, insulate it with styrofoam insulation, put new siding to make my house a

lot warmer. That will lower my heating costs. And the approximate cost of materials is 5,000 plus some for labour.

I guess what he's asking here is there any way that we, as a Saskatchewan community, can help out veterans to try and make their homes warmer, to reduce their costs for heating these homes, because they live on a limited, fixed income.

And this is the exact point, Madam Minister, that many people like Mr. Morin are trying to make. When you have elders living in a region that has severe housing shortages, what happens in essence is many of the grandchildren and the children live with their grandparents and this result creates a tremendous strain on many older people. And this is the reason why we're making such an awful case about this fact that many elders live in poor housing conditions.

So we must make an effort to try and address that particular group, because this group many times can't afford to build their own, they can't afford to repair some of their existing units. And this is where the crux of the problem is.

I can, Madam Minister, if you wish, I could get a list of all the people in northern Saskatchewan that have required some renovations to their homes and I can get that list from you and the applications from the Provincial Metis Housing Corporation. I know they have a whole pile of applications from a whole pile of people, and I sincerely commend your department for keeping their units somewhat in decent shape.

But really the big area that we're having a constant problem is the fact that we've got to get this northern housing system under control when it comes to senior citizens. These people have built our communities. Mr. Morin is one of maybe 50 or 60 in each community that really want some support from government.

They're not asking for \$50,000, they're not asking for freebies, they're asking for some kind of assistance to help them get their house in decent condition. So that makes the point that senior citizens should be the heart and soul of any policy that we make when it comes to northern communities because they're the ones that are doing actually 90 per cent of the building for the future.

So I would encourage you, Madam Minister, to come up with a very aggressive and very innovative approach to fixing seniors' housing in northern Saskatchewan so they can live in their golden years in peace and certainly in decent facilities. That's the very least that we owe these people.

And secondly, Madam Minister, again when I mentioned bringing that list of the RAP applications for northern Saskatchewan . . . and these are people that can't afford to fix their homes. They would if they could, but they simply can't because the social and economic climate in northern Saskatchewan isn't to a point where we're able to go out and borrow and create an economy. Housing, of course, is the biggest area that really hurts.

So can I get your comments on the fact that the RAP applications are quite significant and what do you plan to do if we're able to prove the need is there, especially for seniors?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, actually as the member opposite may know, the federal government had given an indication last year that RAP would be wound down at the end of March 1996 and that it would not be continued. And in fact we were organizing internally to reduce some positions, in fact lay some people off, because if there was going to be not that program to administer or to monitor then there were some people that we wouldn't need.

Then very suddenly without any notice, I believe it was in December, the federal government held a press conference and said, well for a one-year time period, just on an ad hoc basis, this program is going to be extended. So there was some funding that became available. And this is shared funding; we have to contribute a portion and it's pretty well been allocated. I think letters are in the process now of going out to people who will not be able to receive funding because there just wasn't enough money to satisfy the needs of all the applicants.

So we still have the emergency repair program. We have for this year, the RAP, and some people will be able to access that. And then we have our own program, the home modification program, which is meant to allow, primarily, to allow handicapped or senior people to stay in their homes longer by perhaps putting in ramps, wheelchair ramps, lowering towel bars, you know, modifying houses for handicaps or seniors.

So there are those programs, and we certainly . . . we recognize the need and we will do whatever we can to keep in place programs that will give those people a hand up.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess some of the responses I wish to make, Madam Minister, in reference to the situation, is that we must be persistent in terms of recognizing these particular needs. And I go back to the earlier statements I made in this House in essence of the fact that in northern Saskatchewan the entire population of the North only consists of 3 per cent of the provincial population, yet we occupy half the land mass of the province. And my perspective on that is that there's got to be some ways and means that we can find the revenues — or we've got to find the money — to address this situation. And I urge your department and your officials to find ways and means in which we can, for the final time, offer some kind of support and assistance to people that need their houses fixed.

There are some people out there that work for a living, and they can't apply for social housing. So as a result the high costs of having a family and building their own home and doing all of that, they feel that they're being penalized. The housing system in northern Saskatchewan does penalize the working people, so we got to address that particular situation.

And some of the innovative ideas that come out of some of the northern leaders in their efforts to try and resolve the issues, they have very limited funds. They can't do very much. So most of that responsibility lies with senior governments.

So in some way, shape or form, Madam Minister, I would encourage you to today announce that you will undertake a very serious effort at trying to address, not only the shortage of housing for northern Saskatchewan, but really the poor housing stock in terms of fixing up some of the houses, and particularly the senior citizens of northern Saskatchewan, and finally some ways and means to encourage working people to start looking at buying a home or even building their own home by establishing a market for houses to determine the actual value of a house in Deschambault Lake or an actual value of a house in Stony Rapids or the actual value of a house in Beauval.

It's certainly different in northern Saskatchewan. A house in Beauval is not worth the same house in Saskatoon. So there are significant differences. So if I can get your response to some of these points I'm making. Thank you.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the North is not unlike the contrast, I guess, between rural and urban Saskatchewan as well, where as the demographics are changing, that the very same house built in a district in Regina has a different market value than that same house built on a farm that's 75 miles away and 4 or 5 miles away from the nearest neighbour.

So the North, while it has some unique . . . it certainly has, and we recognize the unique needs and some of the unique features, they're not entirely alone in their situation, because there are contrasts as well in southern Saskatchewan.

I'd just say that we know that it costs more to build a house in the North. A very modest bungalow, exclusive of land price, will cost \$70,000 on average — I'm sure the member knows — in the North. Because of the distances involved in bringing materials and the other services that are absent in the North, it just costs more.

And of course the utilities, because of the weather, there is a deterioration factor. And because of the shortage of choices of fuel, fuel costs are very high. So we recognize all the features and all the deficits, if you like, in the housing portfolio in the North. And as I say, with or without the cooperation of the federal government, we would do the best we can.

But I would urge the member opposite to keep reminding his colleagues in Ottawa that perhaps they should rethink their decision made in 1993 to abdicate the responsibility for social housing in Canada. They still have some limited ad hoc programs and some limited involvement for on-reserve housing.

But as for the rest of the social housing needs in Canada, since 1993 we're very much left out to dry. And they have . . . and Paul Martin in his last budget has announced severe reductions to the role of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and perhaps the member opposite would have more clout than I in speaking to their federal counterparts about their responsibility.

But as I say, in the absence of their cooperation we will do whatever we can to meet the needs that we understand and appreciate are there and need to be met.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. For the past 10, 15 years, the senior citizens, the families that are in need of housing, and the working people of the North, have been asking themselves the question of why, if you're aware of all these problems in terms of housing for northern Saskatchewan, why haven't these issues been resolved? Why isn't there innovation, why isn't there excitement, why isn't there new planning being done to meet the housing demands and housing problems of northern Saskatchewan?

In the same token of suggesting that I have more clout than you when it comes to Ottawa, I can assure you that I know more people in Sask Housing than I do in the entire CMHC department.

So in essence the message I have there is that it's time for a Saskatchewan solution. And I can offer all the time you need to travel to Ottawa to lobby and to do my part as MLA for Athabasca. But sincerely, Madam Minister, I think it's incumbent upon your department and specifically you as minister of Sask. Housing to come up with these solutions.

Because we can't let this thing fester any longer. The people of northern Saskatchewan are frustrated, they're upset, they're angry, and who wouldn't be, looking at the living conditions that many of them are suffering from.

So the offer I have to you is that I most certainly will do my share in terms of trying to convince people. And part of that situation is trying to have a deadlock resolved between the province and the federal government when it comes to housing responsibilities. You say it's a federal responsibility and then they turn around and say, well it's a provincial responsibility.

So will somebody please stand up and take leadership on this matter, become a leader, become excited, become innovative, and become a government to try and come up with a long-term solution to these problems.

I guess the point I'm trying to raise on this matter is that, can you assure me that within a specified time frame, and you can specify that this evening, that Saskatchewan itself will come up with a solution to some of these problems that I've addressed here today.

The Chair: — It now being past 5 o'clock, the committee will recess until 7 p.m. tonight.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Murray	2391, 2412
McPherson	2401
Sonntag	2403
Whitmore	2403
Langford	2411
Hamilton	2411
Boyd	2412
Nilson	2412
Atkinson	2412
Van Mulligen	2412
Wiens	2420

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Teichrob	2389
Bjornerud	2389, 2392
Goohsen	2389, 2393
Heppner	2392
Julé	2394

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

Teichrob	2394
Bjornerud	2394
Goohsen	2396

Bill No. 86 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act

Teichrob	2396
Bjornerud	2396, 2399
Goohsen	2397

Bill No. 118 — An Act to amend The Trust and Loan Corporations Act

Nilson	2400
Draude	2400

Bill No. 109 — An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act, 1995 / Loi modifiant La Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil

Cline	2402
Julé	2402

Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting Conservation Easements and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Scott	2403
Draude	2403
D'Autremont	2406
Julé	2406

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

Teichrob	2428
Gantefer	2428, 2434
Bjornerud	2432, 2434
Belanger	2433

THIRD READINGS

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

Teichrob	2409
----------------	------

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

Teichrob	2409
----------------	------

Bill No. 86 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act

Teichrob	2409
----------------	------

Bill No. 118 — An Act to amend The Trust and Loan Corporations Act

Nilson	2409
--------------	------

Bill No. 109 — An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act, 1995 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil

Cline	2409
-------------	------

Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting Conservation Easements and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Scott	2409
-------------	------

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

Teichrob	2434
----------------	------

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Bjornerud	2411
Krawetz.....	2411
Gantefoer.....	2411
McLane.....	2411
Aldridge.....	2411
McPherson.....	2411

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	2411
-------------	------

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

New Grain Handling Facility for Canora

Krawetz.....	2412
--------------	------

Meewasin Valley Authority Wins National Award

Whitmore.....	2413
---------------	------

Tribute to Marilyn Armitage

Haverstock.....	2413
-----------------	------

Indian Business Program Graduation Ceremony

Sonntag.....	2413
--------------	------

Chief Poundmaker Historical Centre Opens

Murrell.....	2413
--------------	------

Beechy Primary Health Project

Wiens.....	2414
------------	------

Torch Run Week

Van Mulligen.....	2414
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political Donations

Osika.....	2414
------------	------

Mitchell.....	2415
---------------	------

Highway Maintenance

McLane.....	2416
-------------	------

Renaud.....	2416
-------------	------

McDowell Report

Boyd.....	2416
-----------	------

Lautermilch.....	2416
------------------	------

Crown Corporations Review

Goohsen.....	2417
--------------	------

Wiens.....	2417
------------	------

Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital Funding

Osika.....	2418
------------	------

Cline.....	2418
------------	------

Health Information Computer Network

Aldridge.....	2419
---------------	------

Cline.....	2419
------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 17 — Political Donations

Osika.....	2419
------------	------

McPherson.....	2422
----------------	------

Stanger.....	2425
--------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Motion No. 1 — Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Toth.....	2426
-----------	------

Stanger.....	2426
--------------	------

Motion No. 3 — Wildlife Damage Compensation

Toth.....	2426
-----------	------

Stanger.....	2428
--------------	------

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Saskatchewan Municipal Board — Vote 22

Teichrob.....	2435
---------------	------

Belanger.....	2435
---------------	------