

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

The Speaker: — Order. I'll ask all hon. members to come to order. Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, some students seated in your gallery today — 22 grade 4 students from Sacred Heart School are in the legislature along with their teacher, Carey Lawson. They're spending part of the day watching us here and they're also getting a tour of the building.

So I look forward to meeting with you in a few minutes after you're done here.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming the students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on Privilege

The Speaker: — Order. Before calling private members' motions, I wish to provide a ruling.

Yesterday the Government House Leader raised a question of privilege concerning comments made by the Leader of the Opposition during oral question period on Friday, June 14. The Government House Leader claimed the comments attacked the conduct and integrity of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I've now had an opportunity to review the record and consider the matter.

Before making my ruling, I remind all hon. members that it is not the role of the Speaker to decide if a breach of privilege or a contempt of the Assembly has been committed. This is a question only the Assembly can decide. It is the Speaker's role to decide whether a prima facie case has been established which would justify the matter taking precedence over the other business before the Assembly.

I will now turn to the case presented by the Government House Leader. The case of the Government House Leader rests on the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition during oral question period on June 14. Having reviewed *Hansard*, it is clear that the Leader of the Opposition did attempt to bring into question the integrity of the Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Commissioner.

On page 2623 the Leader of the Opposition accused the commissioner of being in conflict of interest for being, as he stated, "heavily involved in a company that may have donated funds to the New Democratic Party." The Leader of the Opposition then requested that the Premier remove Mr. McLeod from his post.

The Speaker reminds all hon. members that the Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Commissioner is an officer of this Assembly, not an officer of the government. As such, the commissioner is entitled to the protection of this Assembly as outlined by Sir Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 21st edition, page 130 as follows:

Both Houses will treat as breaches of their privileges, not only acts directly tending to obstruct their officers in the execution of their duty, but also any conduct which may tend to deter them from doing their duty in the future.

Furthermore, the commissioner, according to statute, can only be disciplined or removed from office by an order of this Assembly or by the Board of Internal Economy if the Assembly is not in session. Simply put, charges ought not be brought against any officer of the Assembly incidentally in the midst of other proceedings.

This is well established by previous rulings of the Speaker, and our parliamentary authorities. I refer hon. members to two rulings of the Speaker that are relevant to this case. The first case involved a Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk and was ruled on June 24, 1987. And the second involved the Provincial Auditor and is dated May 23, 1989. I would like to reiterate what the Speaker said on each of these occasions.

It is vital, if parliament is to get a fair and impartial service from its officers, that these officers must be defended from intimidation while conducting their duties. Critical comments attacking the competence or the credibility of an individual can be construed as a form of obstruction.

In this case, I find the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition as being capable of undermining the personal credibility and professionalism of the Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Commissioner. The remarks could draw into question the commissioner's capacity to serve the Legislative Assembly.

I recognize that the Leader of the Opposition did rise to withdraw his remarks and offer an unqualified apology to the Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Commissioner. I note that this is the action the Government House Leader indicated he would move to be required, if the House should find the privilege was breached.

However, while noting these two points, the matter is still before the House, and under rule 6 the Speaker is required to determine whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been established, and it is my finding that this matter does constitute a prima facie matter of privilege.

Before allowing the Government House Leader to move a privilege motion, I do want to make a further comment. While responding to the Leader of the Opposition during question period on June 14, *Hansard* shows that the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training associated the commissioner with a political party. Although the minister did not make a direct accusation, the Speaker is concerned by the comments and finds it unacceptable.

I now leave this matter in the hands of the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm going to ask for leave to move a motion. I will read the motion for the benefit of the House. I would move, seconded by the member from Watrous:

That this House accept the apology of the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to the statements reflecting on the credibility of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner and confirms that a reflection on the credibility of an officer of the Assembly represents a breach of privilege of this Assembly.

If I have leave, I will move a motion.

The Speaker: — Leave is not required and the Government House Leader may move the motion directly.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Watrous:

That this House accepts the apology of the Leader of the Official Opposition with respect to statements reflecting on the credibility of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and confirms that a reflection on the credibility of an officer of the Assembly represents a breach of privilege of the Assembly.

I so move.

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — With leave, to move a motion to go to government business.

Leave not granted.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, seconded by the member from Watrous, that this Assembly do now proceed to government orders.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has attempted to move a superseding motion and the superseding motion is out of order unless it is moved in debate, and the Chair finds the motion out of order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

Motion No. 3 — Wildlife Damage Compensation

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is something which has long been a passion of mine — big game farming. I have been long frustrated, Mr. Speaker, by an inability to get off a speech on big game farming.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — At 21 years, a speech has been . . . for 21 years, Mr. Speaker, a speech has been boiling away in my soul. I now have the opportunity to get rid of this speech.

I am however, I think, not going to speak very long on this subject. I know that members opposite are dying to hear all I know about big game farming.

An Hon. Member: — We are and you're done now.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Indeed that's right. Having said that much, I am done.

I am therefore at this point, Mr. Speaker, going to move, seconded by the member from Watrous:

That this Assembly do now proceed to government orders.

Motion agreed to.

(1015)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 92 — An Act respecting Elections

The Chair: — We'll begin by inviting the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My officials are Darcy McGovern and Ian Brown of the department, who are the officials that have been with the committee during its consideration of this Bill in the previous two sessions.

Clause 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome again, Mr. Minister, to your officials. Thank you for helping us deal with this important Bill.

When we left off we talked about a number of things, and jumping around with that particular Bill. In the Bill now it requires that registered political parties maintain a central administrative office. Is there any particular reason that the government feels this is necessary, that there is a centralized office? And does the central office then have to be an office, such as . . . a simple post office box? Was that the purpose of it, that you can't just have a mailing address without an actual residence?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — My understanding, Mr. Chair, is that this requirement is similar to the requirements with respect to all of the corporations that are incorporated under The Business Corporations Act or any of the other organizations that are required by statute to become registered. And the purpose is so that the persons administering the Act, in this case the Chief Electoral Officer, will have a clear address to which notices can be sent and notices can be served and where in this case the party can be contacted.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This new Bill as well allows for use of computers to prepare voters' lists. I just wondered how limited the use of computers are under the current legislation. Have there been some restrictions up to this point, or just not the facilities.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, the interest of course is in the evolution of a voters' list or in the evolution of the system of enumeration. Right now, it's a rather rushed process that begins when the writ is dropped. It is fully two weeks into the election period before we get a voters' list of any sort, which is subject to revision. That's not a very long time in which to conduct an enumeration in many of the constituencies, particularly in the rural areas where the seats are very large — and the member's own would be a good example of that. And it's not a very satisfactory way of settling the voters' lists.

Now in this Bill we're looking for alternatives, so we have in the Bill a process for an early enumeration after consultation with the parties. And we also have the possibility of cooperating with the federal government in order to produce a voters' list that can be more or less permanent, and continue to exist for both federal and provincial elections and perhaps for other elections, with a provision for revision and updating. And then — and now I'm getting to the member's question — a connection to other sources, and that's where computers come in with their databases.

Now there's a lot of data around. It just occurs to me as I stand here, we have the health records, the driver and motor vehicle records, to name two immediately. We also have municipal records of one sort or another with respect to property ownership, and I think also some track of tenant presence on municipal property. But certainly with respect to the first two, there are opportunities there to complement or supplement or verify the voters' list.

I said yesterday and I want to say again, we are all sensitive to the requirements for confidentiality with respect to some of these databases, and we are going to proceed with some care to ensure that those confidentiality considerations are not abused during this process.

But having said that, there is a lot of information and databases that is not confidential and that can be used in this process of developing a comprehensive and accurate voters' list, and we want to position the Act so that the Chief Electoral Officer can take advantage of those opportunities as they exist.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I'm wondering, once the Chief Electoral Officer has gained some information from a database, who can get the information from him?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — My understanding is that what will be shared will be the list that is compiled — the voters' list — and that that is shared among the parties rather than the database itself. The database itself stands on its own feet as to whether or not it's accessible or parts of it are accessible, and the use by the Chief Electoral Officer can't compromise the disclosure rules with respect to the database.

Let's take for example the health cards. We know that certain aspects of the health records are confidential — my medical records for example. So if the health care records are, in the course of time, used in order to supplement or complement or verify the voters' list, that's to the good I suppose, as long as the confidentiality of my medical records are not compromised.

So that it would not be possible for someone who could not get direct access to some health information, to work through the Chief Electoral Officer to get that same information. In other words, this whole process has to go forward with a great deal of respect to the rules of confidentiality.

Ms. Draude: — So is it up to the Chief Electoral Officer to safeguard the other information that isn't just the names?

(1030)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The way we see this developing, Mr. Chair, and to the member, is that the . . . Any access that the Chief Electoral Officer has to a database will be under an agreement or some kind of regulatory regime which will make it impossible for the Chief Electoral Officer to compromise the integrity of the data or the public access to that data or the confidentiality of that data.

All of this remains in our future of course, and all to be worked out. What we've tried to do here is to establish the legislative framework in which these agreements can be made and this access can be facilitated.

But I want to just underline again, because I think it's so important, this cannot be used to undermine the confidentiality of the various kinds of information that are in these databases and that are now held as confidential.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure that it's not in your vision or it's not something that you plan to do, to allow this information to be given out just haphazardly, and probably not in the foreseeable future. But the way databases and the way technology is changing I'm sure that there'll be information available within five years that we can't even expect it. We won't even know, we won't have a clue, what will be available to people, and maybe there won't be somebody with the integrity that you have or your electoral officer has who will be sitting there.

I'm asking, is the agreements that are going to be signed, will these agreements be brought to the Assembly before, so we

understand what's going to be happening and what will be made available to parties?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I want to refer the member to two sections that I think are responsive to her question. First of all with respect to the idea of using databases in the preparation of the voters' list, in section 30(2) the question of regulations is referred to, and that would include, first off the mark, regulations:

(a) respecting the preparation and verification of a voters' list, including authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to use the databases, lists and information prescribed in the regulations;

The section requires that before the Lieutenant Governor in Council adopts such regulations, there must be consultation with the leader of each registered political party. So that it is not simply a government decision to do that, it is a decision of all of us, requiring consultation, before the Lieutenant Governor in Council acts.

The other point is that the voters' list itself is not freely available to the public. It is available to registered political parties and to candidates, and to officers under this Act — namely the Chief Electoral Officer and the returning officer for the particular constituency that the voters' list pertains to. Now that second protection — let me say protection — is to be found in section 177, so we have those two safeguards. And I'm glad the member is raising these questions because I think it's important.

The question of the use of information in databases and the limitations on that use is a developing idea. It's lagging a bit behind the databases themselves, but it is something that there's a fairly high level of consciousness about in the community. And indeed in Saskatchewan there has been at least one letter to the editor which raised this issue in a very thorough way, and I thought it was a good letter that raised a very, very good point.

We can't just rush pell-mell into this, grabbing information out of databases. We have to be sure we use it in a very appropriate way that doesn't compromise the rights of individuals.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I noted that the Act read that there would be consultation with leaders of the political parties. What happens in the situation that the leader of a political party may not be elected as yet? You know this has happened, so you're going to be talking to a leader who may not be officially representing the people. What are you saying about that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well we will consult with an interim leader if there is one, and we would expect that in the fullness of time there would be a leader.

It's very important for our leaders here to deal with these responsibilities in an appropriate way and take them to their caucuses and to their provincial organizations and deal with it as a question for the political party, both elected and non-elected, and not just a question for the leader to determine. That's the under-pinning for this. We would just expect that to

happen in the normal course.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, another question that I have on these databases is, does the Act allow you to get information only from companies or cards that are registered in Saskatchewan? And I'm thinking about things like VISA cards and where the headquarters aren't in Saskatchewan. Are they going to be able to get financial information from Ontario or Timbuctoo or wherever there might be some information you want?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We most definitely do not have in mind accessing commercial lists like VISA or like Simpson Sears or whatever. The kinds of lists that we're talking about here would be the public databases. We've been discussing in the Assembly this morning the databases of the provincial government and the two main ones. The federal government has databases also and it may be possible that we would access those in the future. But we do not include in that the commercial databases.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, does this Act give you the right to access other information like bank cards, even though you don't plan to at this time? Does it give you the authority to do it?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we would have no right to demand that from any private organization, any private corporation, and we don't contemplate doing it. And I just remind the member that all of these initiatives are subject to consultation between the parties.

But let me just state categorically that we do not intend to attempt to access private databases.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Minister. Then I guess this Act is saying that you can ask for the information but you don't have the right to demand the information from somebody who might have a private database.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We don't even intend to ask for it.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one other question on this line. We talked about all parties will have the opportunity to get this information. Is it information that will be just shared as soon as it is received, or will the parties have to be asking for it? Or how will they know that it's available?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, the way that this will work out is that as the Chief Electoral Officer develops a voters' list or collects voter data, he or she will contact the political parties. We will then have access to that information, but we are all going to have to enter into an agreement, sign an agreement with the Chief Electoral Officer, as to its use.

Like we will not be at liberty, we will not be permitted, to take that list and sell it to some direct mail organization or some private sector company for our profit, for example. And that's appropriate because everybody wants that voters' list — it's the best listing that exists for names and mailing addresses in the province.

So that section 177 contemplates that each party, all of our parties, will have to enter into an agreement with respect to the sharing or use of the voters' list or any voter data collected pursuant to the Act by the Chief Electoral Officer. And on entering into that agreement, then the information will be shared with us as and when it's available.

Ms. Draude: — So the only information that will be available from the private databases is the names and addresses. Is that correct?

(1045)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, if the member means by "private databases" the kind of . . . the database of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in its VISA operation, we don't want access to that and we're not going to ask for it and we're not going to get it.

But as far as the public databases are concerned, provincial or federal, we will move with caution to access those databases in consultation with the other parties and in a way that's appropriate, having regard to the privacy rights of the citizens that are in the database. But we will not be moving outside those public databases to ask for any verification or any supplement from any of the private databases that may exist in our society.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Good morning, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

Mr. Minister, just in carrying on with the line of questioning that has been going on here, I'm wondering if there has been any anticipation of the period of time before the election writ, before the writ has dropped, that this database or this list may be in fact forwarded to the parties.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes. We see the process moving towards a different system of enumeration and we've provided within the framework of this Bill . . . we've all done that. I mean we worked on this thing together. We provided first of all for an early enumeration to take place, after consultation with all the parties, so that we don't have this last-minute rush, and so that we can have a voters' list early. And I know we all want that. All our organizations all want it and need it because we're sort of groping in the dark until we get that voters' list. And to get it on day 14 of a 28-day election campaign is almost ludicrous. So that's one innovation that's in the Bill.

The second is the longer-range idea and that is a permanent voters' list, a voters' list that will apply both federally and provincially and perhaps in other elections, municipally and the like — and a list that can be updated or revised from time to time, and a list that is verified or supplemented by databases where that's appropriate.

So both those ideas move towards a list that will be available to the people who run for elected office provincially and get it to them at a time when it's useful to them rather than just two weeks before the election.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I take it then from your comments that it will be with consultation, and from all three parties, that they will come to an agreement on the time that these lists will be released prior to the election writ?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, that's quite right. The Act contemplates that there be consultation with respect to the idea of accessing lists. Consultation doesn't demand agreement, as the member will understand, but it does demand discussion and an exchange of views and an attempt to find a common solution.

Secondly, the regulations will also speak to when that information is to be released, and that itself will require a consultation. So there'll be consultation on both aspects of it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, one of the major concerns that we've had in our discussions in caucus, and also in my constituency, was the definition of election expenses. And the particular concern revolves around the changes, I guess, that mean that now we can't even get business cards or send out flyers or whatever paraphernalia we may need before the election is called. And so we can do it, but of course we can't get a rebate for that kind of thing.

Now I'm just wondering why. Because this seems really to impose a great difficulty on the candidates and on the, in fact the constituencies, in preparing for the election. And although I don't feel anyone should have a unfair disadvantage, I do believe that within a reasonable time before the writ is dropped that these things should be able to be ordered, and that a rebate should be coming, I would say within maybe even two weeks.

We never know when the writ is going to be dropped, I understand that, but I think in preparing for the election a person can sort of assume when elections will come, and it would be only fair to be able to prepare properly. Because this is like anything else — if your first set of flyers or whatever goes out two weeks after the writ is dropped or a week after, it's just not adequate time to be in touch with the voters.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I'm waiting for an additional piece of information but I'll start my answer in response to the member's question and then pick up this information when it comes back to the Chamber.

First of all this idea of election expenses used during an election is not a new idea. That's been the way it's been for a long time, certainly for as long as I've been running, which is quite some time now.

It is not necessary that the expense be incurred during that period. The expense can be incurred before, any time before. The question is, used. So if I print up 10,000 candidate's cards to be handed out as I do my canvassing and I use 2,000 of those during the election period, I'm entitled to claim as an expense one-fifth, two-tenths — one-fifth of the cost of those cards as an election expense and I'm entitled to be reimbursed for that. So that's the first point that I wanted to mention; that it is a matter of what has been used during the election period.

The information I was waiting for has come and it is this: that in the administration of the Act the Chief Electoral Officer has been taking into consideration some of the practical aspects of running an election campaign. And so he has been allowing six weeks rental on premises for the purpose of conducting your campaign.

So there's an example of an expense that on a literal reading of the Act, that space is used during the election period for the 28 or 29 or 30 days, but he has on a practical level allowed six weeks rental so that you could be taking the premises before and holding them for a couple or three days afterwards in order to clean up your offices. There's also telephone hook-ups that are allowed and insurance on buildings and that sort of thing. So there's some flexibility around it.

Now this question is going to be addressed by the Chief Electoral Officer in the guidelines that are referred to in the Act so that we will all know the rules before we go into the next election. We will all know what is allowed and what is not allowed, and that will clear up the source of difficulty that we've all had in every election where we are arguing about the interpretation of the Act and whether certain expenses are allowed. We're going to try to make that very clear between the Act and the guidelines — make it very clear.

I just want to end on this note, which I touched on yesterday, and which is the subject of a House amendment from the member's side, and it is pre-election expenses. And we have had interesting discussions about that, and I tried to set out yesterday the rationale on the basis of which the government was not willing to accept the suggestion that had been put forward. It's a good argument, a good discussion, and there's fair merit in the position put forward by the Liberal Party. But our reaction to it has been that we prefer the tightness of the present system where the expenses that are to be reimbursed by the taxpayer are the expenses that are for goods and services used during an election period.

Now I recognize that's only one formulation; other ideas are workable. The idea put forward by the member's party is a workable idea, but we have various choices there. And we just feel that the tightest, cleanest, clearest system is to maintain the idea that has existed in this province for some long time, ever since elections were controlled, and limit those to expenses for goods and services used during the election period.

(1100)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd just like to go back a bit to your just comments. When you talked about the right to use a portion of your expenses, for instance for any candidates' cards or whatever, you alluded to, or you said in fact that the portion used after the writ has been dropped would be acceptable to get a rebate on. So does that mean that I would simply, even if the bills were paid prior to the election writ, that I would be able to submit that bill, dock two-tenths or whatever of it, and then have the right to have a rebate on that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I just have one more question before I turn the questioning over to my colleague. I notice that the Act prior prohibited the purchase of alcohol for voters or for workers. And it seems now that food and other drinks are acceptable. I'm wondering why this change was made.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we have three sections that are relevant. Section 193 carries forward the provision that there won't be any beverage alcohol at a meeting of voters assembled for the purpose of promoting the election of the candidate, which means our political meetings. There will be no alcohol there.

Second, in section 195, there's a general prohibition to prohibit giving beverage alcohol to any person for the purpose of persuading that person to vote which is . . . our history has been dotted with examples of when that's been tried.

And 198 deals with beverage alcohol on polling day and prohibits any person from directly or indirectly giving beverage alcohol to any voter. And contravention of that section is a corrupt practice.

But at the same time, as the member observes, we have relaxed the previous prohibition on the giving of food and refreshments — coffee, juices, pop, and that sort of thing. And the problem was that all of us have got doughnuts and muffins and cookies and coffee and refreshments in our campaign offices for the refreshment of our workers as they come in and out and for anybody coming in to have any kind of discussion will also have access to this. And that is obviously not a corrupt practice and obviously not intended to bribe anybody or buy their votes.

So we wanted to be sure that there was never any allegation that any of us were offending the Act when we were doing such commonplace things as the ones I've mentioned.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, am I hearing correctly then, that food and other drinks . . . when referring to "other drinks", other drinks do not include alcohol? All right.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's right.

Ms. Julé: — And from what you have said, the use of alcohol is regulated very closely, and so those guidelines are laid out for us in The Election Act which I certainly can go to and look at. And I thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I just want to confirm that in three separate sections alcohol is prohibited in different circumstances.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, there's just a little bit of confusion over section 23 which details the enumerators' right to access private dwellings. The first two subsections — or sub-clauses, I'm sorry — of that particular section says people do not have a right to deny access, but then the third sub-clause seems to override these completely. I just wondered if you might explain the reason for that.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The question is a natural one but I think the explanation is actually quite simple.

What (1) of section 23 does is entitle an enumerator to access to any residential premise, and (2) supports that idea so that the thrust of those two subsections is that an enumerator is entitled to access to a residential premise, but then (3) comes along and says, notwithstanding (1) and (2), if the residential premise is a private dwelling, then the resident might deny access to the enumerator.

Now reading those sections all together what you're left with is this. The residential premises that are not a private dwelling is an apartment block. Each apartment block will have within it a number of private dwellings. But the residential premise being the apartment block means that the enumerator can get into the building and has access to the doors. Now if the person behind the door says no, I don't want to talk to you, buzz off, that's still their right. But the apartment owner hasn't the right to say you can't come in here to enumerate the people.

Now it's interesting because we as candidates have the right under the Act during an election period to access apartment blocks. And the owners can't keep us out. This will put the enumerators into the same position as the candidates. Our canvassers similarly have a right to enter if they're our authorized candidate. So this puts the enumerators on the same basis as our canvassers.

Not only apartment blocks are a concern, but the more modern idea of the condominium enclosures, where you have limited access by card locks and that sort of thing. They are not simple to get into. This ensures that they will be able to get into the condominium enclosures because those are residential premises. Again, whether they get behind an individual door depends upon the person behind the door.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess that question was asked because for someone, a lay person or anyone for that matter, reading that particular section might be asking that. Do you believe that that would be clear enough? Is there any way of perhaps making it a little more explicit for the benefit of people that may be asking the same kind of question that I just asked?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, the member will know from his own experience how difficult it is to ensure that all laws are written so that everybody can automatically understand them, and this is certainly one of those sections. We've just had an interesting discussion about it and it's not perfectly clear on the face of it what you're talking about.

What we're going to have to do in this and in any other situations, is for the Chief Electoral Officer to do what is very often done, and that is to advertise; to make public what the law is so that people will know. The question of access to apartment blocks by canvassers and candidates was one such thing. It was a new law when it was first enacted.

And there was . . . You know, you had to make sure the landlords knew it so that you didn't run into embarrassing

situations. So the Chief Electoral Officer found ways to do that. You can write to the landlords' associations, but you also can insert paid advertisements into daily newspapers and the like. And one way or another the word gets out and gradually people become very much aware of what the law is.

And we haven't had any trouble getting into apartment blocks now for a couple of elections. But before that it was a problem and it took awhile for this law to become generally known. It may take awhile for this law to become generally known but I think we can find ways to work it through.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, the cabinet currently appoints returning officers in each riding. Why would the Chief Electoral Officer not appoint these people?

(1115)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The returning officers have been appointed by order in council, as the member indicates, and we propose to continue to do that. And the reason why we do that is that it has a degree of formality about it. It is an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, so it's not a trivial matter. It's an important matter and it's a public matter. It's made public, as all other orders in council are. It's gazetted. And it gives the idea of the returning officer a degree of formality that I think is desirable. That person then has a status conferred in a very public way.

In practice what happens is that cabinet receives recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer as to the naming of returning officers. It is quite a chore for the Chief Electoral Officer because he's got to come up with 58 names in 58 different constituencies of people who are prepared to undertake such a job. It's a difficult job and anyone planning to get rich ought not to aspire to be a returning officer.

The Chief Electoral Officer, I know goes through a consultative outreaching process to find an appropriate returning officer, because it's in everyone's interest that this person have a good capacity, a level of competence that will ensure that all these duties — and there are considerable duties — will be done properly. And so it's quite a task.

The Chief Electoral Officer consults around the community and does so in a kind of a blind way, because no Chief Electoral Officer is going to be familiar with all 58 constituencies. But the process involves making inquiries, finding out who might be interested.

One of the persons they inquire with — and I should be perfectly blunt about this — are the elected members because we're known to be from there and we're known to know the community and we're known to be able to produce alternatives.

So there is a political aspect to it and it has been so for a long time. And we all know that and we make no apologies for it. But it is very often not possible for the political party, for the political representative, to suggest a returning officer and the Chief Electoral Officer then has to fall back on other names and

in the end put forward the name of somebody who is up to the job.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, it is the appearance of patronage that certainly could be an issue in appointing returning officers and so that's partly why I put that forward.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me how the Chief Electoral Officer is selected or how he ends up getting that position. What is the process whereby he is selected? Is he appointed? Is he elected? Is he . . . how does he or she come to that position?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I was not personally involved in the appointment of Mr. Kuziak, but I know that there were a number of people interviewed. The interviews were conducted by people, I think from within Executive Council. And there was a short list and I don't know how many were on the short list, but from that list Mr. Kuziak was selected and in due course was appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. It was not a formal competitive process that I know of; I think it was informal.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I'm interested in those last comments, that the sitting member might happen to be consulted on the appointment of a returning officer in that particular constituency, because I don't remember being consulted prior to the 1995 election as to who would be an appropriate returning officer for the Cannington constituency. Perhaps some of the other constituencies there was consultation with the sitting members, but I don't recall that opportunity being given to me.

But perhaps, Mr. Minister, that opportunity was given to the government member who represents or who looks after or who has been assigned my constituency as his orphan — his or her orphan. Perhaps that member was consulted as to who would be an appropriate returning officer.

So perhaps it would be a good idea though, Mr. Minister, if the sitting member in that riding was consulted, because they do indeed know who might happen to make a good returning officer, who has some experience in it, let's say, or who would be interested. So perhaps that is something that should be considered in this Bill or at least in the regulations.

Another item, Mr. Minister, as it relates to the federal Act for the appointment of deputy returning officers and poll clerks. And you can correct me if I'm wrong on this, but it's my understanding that under the current legislation or at least the current practice, the party that won the seat in the last election appoints, or recommends, I should say, the deputy returning officers for each poll. And the party that placed second in the previous election recommends people for appointment as the poll clerks.

I know that this kind of a separation was carried out in the '93 federal election, I believe, also in the referendum on the Charlottetown accord. And it seemed to work very well. All the parties seemed to be relatively happy with it, particularly during the referendum where all three political parties were asked to

provide some support in that measure in providing deputy returning officers and poll clerks.

In the last provincial election in my own constituency, we had I think a good working relationship with the returning officer. The party in power — your government, Mr. Minister — appointed the deputy returning officers, or recommended the deputy returning officers for most polls. Our party was asked to recommend names for the poll clerks.

So, Mr. Minister, have you given any consideration to allowing that procedure to take place under the current Act? Would that be . . . if that was to occur, would that be placed in the Act, or would that simply be an administrative measure to be dealt with through regulations?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I am indebted to the member, Mr. Chair, for the ideas that he's presented on the basis of the federal way of approaching these things.

That's the new idea as far as I'm concerned and as far as the officials who are with me are concerned. But we'll give some thought to that and see where it leads us. I don't know whether it would take the form of a regulation or simply an administrative process. I would think the latter.

The Act provides who does the appointing. The returning officer appoints the deputy returning officer, and the deputy returning officer appoints the poll clerk. But there is nothing . . . no further direction in the Act. We'll take the member's suggestion under consideration.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Chair, I want to just go back to the question asked by the . . . the previous question asked by the member from Humboldt. And I want to say to the . . . through you, Mr. Chair, to the member from Humboldt, that the present Chief Electoral Officer was appointed after a consultation had . . . after a competition had been run by the Public Service Commission.

And I want to amend my previous answer in that regard. I previously had said it had been an informal competition. In fact it was a formal competition.

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and my thanks to the minister and the member from Souris-Cannington for the courtesy.

Seated in your gallery, Mr. Chairman, is a group of 10 students from W.H. Ford School. These are students in the senior alternate education program and they are spending some time in the gallery here today along with their teachers, Louise Brown and Ghislaine Montague, and chaperon Mrs. O'Connor.

They are going to spend a little time here and then I understand that they're going to have a picnic in the park. After that they are coming back to have a tour of the building.

So would you please join me in extending to them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 92 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, there are times when political parties find it perhaps difficult to recommend people for positions because it may be seeding time and people aren't available to fill the recommendation. It has worked out well in the past. As I mentioned, in our constituency in the last election both parties and perhaps all three parties had the opportunity to recommend people for deputy returning officer and for the poll clerk, and a number of those recommendations were accepted from at least two of the political parties, and I can't speak for the third one.

So, Mr. Minister, I think that has some valid opportunities there and I think it adds a little more fairness to the political process and allows everyone to participate a little more fully.

I'd like to move on to some questions about the voters' lists, and I know this has been covered to some degree by the opposition. But the question is: who would have access to the lists?

Now you have indicated that the lists would not be available for commercial use. But would the list be available for, say, a third party, a special interest group, who for whatever reason may desire to have that voters' list to be able to contact people within a certain area for some reason?

I'm thinking of the group down at Bienfait when they had some concerns about a waste disposal site going into the area. They wanted to be able to contact people throughout the appropriate area — to go through the phone book to find names, or to go back and find someone who had old voters' lists available to extract the names and addresses off of that. It's possible for anyone to do. They maybe shouldn't have access to those voters' lists — I don't know — but a lot of mechanical work, but it's possible to do it.

But while you are sitting with the lists, Mr. Minister, would it not be possible for someone — a non-profit corporation or a service club, some sort of other interest that would not be using it for commercial interests — to have access to those lists?

(1130)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member asks a very interesting question, Mr. Chair. Of course the voters' lists are posted; we all know that. And we have introduced some changes there so

they're not on the telephone poles where people felt too vulnerable, but we have still required them to be posted in a public way. So that's one aspect of the situation raised by the member.

The other very interesting section is section 177 — and I had cause to refer to this earlier in the committee's consideration — but section 177 provides that the Chief Electoral Officer may enter into agreements with respect to sharing or using a voters' list or any voter data collected pursuant to this Act with any political party that is registered pursuant to the Act.

And then (5) goes on and says that the political party, on entering into the agreement with the Chief Electoral Officer — and we're all going to have to do that:

. . . (the) political party may use the voters' list or voter data for any purpose related to this Act or any other Act or Act of the Parliament of Canada governing elections.

So from that it is clear that the purpose of the voters' list is to run the election, and I think that's appropriate.

Now it may be that we would come to the conclusion — we, meaning the parties in this Assembly — that this data may be used for other purposes. Maybe used for . . . You know, I can't imagine circumstances. The member mentions some.

Those, I think, could be addressed in the negotiation of the agreement with the Chief Electoral Officer. But unless and until we got something like that in place, we have to respect I think, the fact that these are voters' lists compiled for the purpose of running an election and ought to be restricted to that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When the political parties gain access to this list after signing the agreement, in what form will that list take? Will it be a computer-generated hard copy? Will it be data files? And if so, in what format will those data files be available?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't know for sure, but judging by the developments of the technology, I would expect we would have it in the form of either computer printouts or diskettes or something like that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think it would be extremely important that these lists be available as computer data rather than simply as hard copy paper. All that would mean is that the political parties then in turn would have to simply re-enter all that data onto a database again. So I think it's important.

I know that the federal government provides the lists in data form. You can get it all on a diskette and use it in the appropriate manner. So I think it's important that these lists be maintained the same way and provided in the same manner.

How will the updating of the process work, Mr. Minister? Will the updating be handled . . . you have talked about accessing other government databases. So if somebody moves into the province, takes out a Saskatchewan health care card, will that

name then be updated immediately on the voters' list, or at the next election, or how often? How soon will that updating process take place?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I don't know at what pace these developments will occur. It may well be that at some future time the lists can be so responsive to change that it will work as the member says. I think we will find ourselves moving at a measured pace here and not try to go to the sort of full meal deal that the member is talking about, but to use technology to buttress the system and to make it better and introduce advances as and when we can.

This is chiefly a technical problem and I think will be dealt with as such in the Chief Electoral Officer's range of duties and in cooperation with other jurisdictions, particularly the federal jurisdiction. And I would expect to see a steady range of improvement, arriving some day perhaps at the kind of instantaneous system that the member sees, but I can't see that far.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that as of July 1 this year there will be a by-election occurring within the next six months, would the database for the constituency of North Battleford be available by that time under this particular Act?

In all likelihood this Act will not be proclaimed until January 1, '97, but that doesn't mean that the databases could not be prepared for the North Battleford constituency. Because obviously an enumeration will have to take place. The list will have to be produced. I suspect that even today they're being produced . . . data is being stored on a computer and then simply a hard copy generated from that.

Would that electronic data be available to the political parties for the upcoming by-election which will be held in North Battleford at some point within the next six months?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think all I can do in response is to pass on the member's remarks to the Chief Electoral Officer. I couldn't begin to answer the questions that the member puts.

It had been our plan to proclaim this Act as soon as possible and we judged that would not be before January 1, 1997. As the member points out, that would be after the North Battleford by-election.

But whether any of the possibilities that the member mentions can take place in time for that by-election, we'll just have to see.

And I will pass on the member's remarks to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while this data is being collected and generated, I'm assuming that we'll have the name of the individual, their poll number, the number they are in relationship to that particular poll, their address. Will they also have the occupation of the person, the voter, because that is currently on the voters' lists.

Will they also have telephone numbers, which are not currently on the voters' lists? And what other information might be available through the databases?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member is correct as to the data that will be included, except for the phone number. We have no provisions in the Act for including the phone number.

I just might mention that with respect to North Battleford, the database from the June '95 enumeration is on disk and it will provide the base from which I suppose an up-to-date voters' list will be determined.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Since that voters' list is on disk, I'm not sure that it's available to the political parties on the disk at the present time. As I recollect the last election, we only receive voters' lists in hard copy and so perhaps you could check and see whether or not it would be available on disk.

I also have a question as it relates to the federal elections, the Canada Elections Act. What is the definition under that Act of a registered party as opposed to a registered political party?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — My understanding is that the idea of a registered party under the Canada Elections Act is the same as the registered political party that we have in this legislation; so to all intents and purposes they're the same. One is registered federally and the other provincially.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move we report progress.

(1145)

Bill No. 77 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Beside me is Lawrence Krahn who's the executive director of the medical care insurance branch. And behind Mr. Krahn is Glenda Yeates, who's the senior associate deputy minister of Health. And directly behind me is Rick Hischebett who's a lawyer with the Department of Justice, who provides legal advice to the Department of Health.

Clause 1

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and your officials here today. Just some questions, Mr. Minister, maybe if we could start with a short explanation of why you brought forward this amendment at this time and what prompted you to do that.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I would be happy to say why, Mr. Chair. The Saskatchewan Medical Association, as the member from Arm River knows, provides certain benefits to physicians in Saskatchewan, including negotiating their benefit packages,

representing the concerns of physicians to government and so on. And not all physicians are members of the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

In 1986 the Saskatchewan Medical Association came to the Government of Saskatchewan and said that they wanted all physicians to pay fees or dues to the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) because they reasoned that all physicians benefited from the services that they provide, whether or not they were members.

And at that time in 1986, changes were made to the medical care insurance branch allowing the government to deduct dues from payments made to physicians and to pay those monies to the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

Then in December of 1995 or thereabouts, some time in 1995 in any event — I'm sorry, April of 1995 — the government reached an agreement with the Saskatchewan Medical Association which was a framework agreement setting out the rules as between government and the physicians. And one of the provisions of that agreement was that the government would introduce legislation, actually the legislation we have before us today, that would enable the government, namely the Minister of Health, to direct people paying physicians to direct some money to the SMA, namely the dues.

And the government agreed to that with the physicians subject to the physicians first going to the non-fee-for-service doctors and getting their approval in a referendum to do this. They had a referendum in December of 1995 — not too long ago — which only involved doctors who are not on a fee-for-service basis but are paid a salary, to see if they would agree to this legislation. And 240 doctors voted, and of that number, 70 per cent of the doctors — these would be the ones affected — agreed to the legislation.

And once the referendum by these physicians was passed, then according to the agreement between the government and the SMA, which was arrived at last April, the government was in a position where it had agreed to put this legislation before the House.

So as the result of the request by the SMA, the agreement that we have with the SMA and the approval of 70 per cent of the doctors affected, we have brought the legislation forward.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In section 47, it makes reference to section 48 talking about an amount determined in agreement pursuant to section 48 for services rendered by the SMA association. Can you elaborate on those a bit?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — To the member, Mr. Chair, section 48 of the existing legislation simply sets out a process whereby the doctors negotiate with the government, and one of the matters that the doctors negotiate with government is the amount that government should deduct with respect to each doctor and pay to the SMA.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. And the amount of those fees are?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — At the present time, it is: for fee-for-service physicians, \$866.25; and for salaried physicians, \$530.62.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is that fee . . . that's a yearly fee?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's correct.

Mr. McLane: — And so any fee-for-service physician, regardless of his income, would pay the same fees. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The fee does not vary as between specialities, although if you are a physician working on a part-time basis they have a system of prorating so that if you worked half time you might pay half the fee, for example. But it would not vary according to whether you were part of a very high billing specialty. Your fee would not go up on that basis.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, do you have the numbers of doctors that we have on fee-for-service, and those that are on salary, and those that are on other contracts?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I believe that there are 1,333 fee-for-service physicians in the province and 240 non-fee-for-service physicians for a total of 1,573 physicians. And 240 of that larger number is 15 per cent, of the physicians are non-fee-for-service.

And I should . . . I want to correct a previous answer I just gave you when I said that 240 people voted and 70 per cent approved this arrangement; 240 ballots were sent out, but actually I see here that 103 ballots were returned, and of those 103, 70 per cent were in favour. And then obviously the other 137 chose not to vote but they did receive a ballot.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. That indeed was where I was heading, Mr. Minister. Do you think . . . In your mind, what would the reason be for those other doctors not to have responded to the questionnaire? And have they since been invited to respond or has your department corresponded with them at all on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, we have not been in further contact with them because they had the opportunity to vote.

I guess the way I look at it is, it's like a municipal election or a school board election or indeed an election to this House. Everybody gets the opportunity to vote; if they choose not to exercise their right to vote, then they suffer the consequences along with everybody else. And we haven't made any special efforts to canvass those who chose not to vote, nor would I draw any conclusion that they would be opposed to or in favour of the legislation; although I would draw the conclusion that they probably aren't terribly excited about it one way or the other.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. However just quickly looking over the numbers that you've given us, that would mean that less than a third of the doctors who responded were in favour of these fees. However I'm not sure whether

that's a major issue or not; it could come to light in view of some of the proposals that are being made, not necessarily in this Bill, but in some of the other health Bills that we're going to be dealing with later today.

You mentioned that you talked about the doctors belonging to the SMA, the Saskatchewan Medical Association. I just want to clarify a couple of things with you, one being that first of all membership in the SMA is voluntary. Is that correct? And secondly, what happens if these doctors choose not to pay those fees?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well this is designed to deal with that situation. In other words, once this is passed, even if they chose not to pay the fees, the fees would be paid. Because just as for fee-for-service physicians who choose not to pay at the present time, the Minister of Health through the medical care insurance branch, makes a check-off in effect and pays the due for the physician to the SMA. And the physician has no choice in the matter; it's mandatory. Even though membership is voluntary, but payment of the money is mandatory.

That is the existing situation we have today. What this does is extend the same rule to physicians who do not work in a fee-for-service setting, the 15 per cent who are on salary or some other arrangement.

Mr. McLane: — Maybe, Mr. Minister, you could explain to us why you feel it's important that even though membership in the SMA is voluntary that it's important that the fees be deducted. Is that to sustain the SMA? Or is there some other reasons that I don't personally understand and possibly the people of the province don't either?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is not I who feel it is as important. I do feel it's important, but it is not I that feels it's of crucial importance as much as the medical profession itself. The SMA has asked for this. We have agreed to it in an agreement we arrived at.

And the fact is that all positions benefit from the activities of the SMA. It provides various services, including negotiation of fee increases on behalf of physicians. It lobbies government on behalf of physicians for other benefits such as the provision of a continuing medical education fund and incentives to enhance the provision of services in rural and remote areas and other matters.

So the theory is, the SMA says, well we do all this which benefits every physician and every physician should share the cost of these activities. And that's why it's important to the SMA; that's why we agreed to it and why we've introduced the legislation.

Mr. McLane: — Carrying that same logic, we might take it a step further, Mr. Minister. And I'm certainly not questioning the value of the SMA and the need for some sort of a medical organization in this province.

But I guess the problem that I might have with it would be that if you looked at another organization, for example an

agricultural organization, whether it be the farmers union, whether it be the western Canadian wheat growers, — which is a poor example — let's use the farmers union. In Saskatchewan, for example, they might make the argument that they do lobby on behalf of farmers, and anything that they gain is a benefit to all the farmers in the province.

However I would hate to have to be mandated or legislated by the provincial government, that as a farmer I would be forced to become a member of that association. Do you not think there's analogy here between the two? And could you explain the difference?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well actually I thought you already were a member of the NFU (National Farmers Union), but perhaps I was mistaken in that regard.

The difference would be that in this case what we have required the physicians to do is to give everybody an opportunity to vote whether they wanted dues payment to be mandatory.

And I should add that the medical profession of course is a self-governing profession which exists by statute, namely The Medical Profession Act. And as you know, it has two parts to it — the college of physicians and surgeons and the SMA.

The National Farmers Union would be different in two respects. First of all, it is not a statutory obligation carrying out public functions. It is not a self-governing profession.

And secondly, no ballot has been cast to my knowledge asking all the producers in the province whether they wish us to take the step of making dues payment to the NFU mandatory. But if you're proposing that we have that kind of referendum, I could take that up with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, but I don't know if you're making that proposal today or not.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I maybe underestimated your knowledge of agriculture in this province. Maybe some day some questions in agriculture we'll have to direct to you, since at some times I notice the Minister of Agriculture is a little reluctant in answering some of them, so maybe you could help him out, if you would, on that as well. And I see he's moved close to you now. Maybe he's going to help you with some health questions.

I guess when we talked about the concern of . . . do you have a concern that there are going to be an increasing number of salary positions in the province which might have prompted this move as well?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, I don't have any particular concern about that. It's not something that I would be concerned about nor is it something that is particularly relevant to this Bill, in the sense that whether or not this Bill was passed by the legislature would not affect movement with respect to reforming the primary care system which is being discussed at the national level and so on. If that was to be done it would have to be done in other ways, perhaps involving other pieces

of legislation, not this one.

I think that the concern might be more so on the part of the SMA in the sense that they realize that there are positions who welcome a different method of payment, and there are probably more positions on an alternative payment basis now than there were before. And the SMA is concerned that, because of that fact, they believe that these physicians should contribute to the costs of the representation that all physicians benefit from through the SMA.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. Do you think it will become an issue down the road, whether it's this year or next year, with some of those physicians that are going to be on salary or that are on salary, in light of the low number of people that returned your ballot?

When the fees are deducted from those people, whether it be through the district boards or someone else's, as noted in the amendment here it of course states that:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations requiring the minister or any other person to:

I guess I have asked a number of questions here already. Maybe you could explain as well what the regulation means when you talk about any other person. Are we referring to district health boards? Are we referring to private clinics, those types of things?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the other person could be any entity which had a physician in its employ or a contract with a physician. So that it might be a district health board or it might be a private clinic.

In answer to your question about the rate of return of the ballots, I can only return to what I said before and that is the participation was higher than in some municipal elections. And we don't . . . if we have a municipal election where two-thirds of the people don't vote, we don't question the legitimacy of the result in terms of, for example, a reeve and the councillors being elected. And we don't question their legitimacy in terms of levying their taxes and so on. Because that's the way the system works.

And it's like everything else — those that don't participate in the democratic process, and this was . . . you know, there was a referendum of the physicians, are not in a position to complain about what happened. We have to go on the basis of the 70 per cent of those who voted, who voted in favour of this legislation. And each physician's concern was put on notice by the SMA that this issue is being determined. There was a referendum explaining the issues and advising if they had the right to vote.

Mr. McLane: — However, Mr. Minister, it is indeed a fact again that only a third of those salaried physicians voted. I'm just wondering, is this the first time that a survey has been done, or attempted survey, of the doctors has been done to see their opinion on the deduction of the fees for the SMA?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In 1966 there . . . or '86 I should say, there

was a similar referendum with respect to bringing this system in for the fee-for-service physicians, and at that time there was approval. And now this has been a similar procedure with respect to the non-fee-for-service physicians.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. When the decision was made to make the deal with the SMA and to do this survey, was there a discussion took place as to who should receive the survey? Whether the 1,500 doctors in total should receive it and be able to put forward their ideas, or was that part of the discussion?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It was not a survey, it was a referendum. And I think that's what the member . . . I don't think the member means to suggest any distinction on that basis.

It was agreed that the . . . There was discussion about it. It was agreed that the people who should get to vote would be those affected, which were the 240. If you had the others vote, who are already obligated to pay, of course they would decide whatever they wanted, and the non-fee-for-service physicians would have no say because they were a minority. So it was thought to be more fair simply to have them vote, and that's what was done.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, you mentioned about a — I believe you used the word referendum in 1986 about the establishment of a fee-for-service — and I'm wondering, at that time, Mr. Minister, how many physicians would have been qualified to vote, and how many physicians actually took the time to vote and how many voted in favour of the fee-for-service?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — All fee-for-service physicians would have been polled at that time but we do not have the numbers with us as to the number who . . . which existed at that time or the number who voted or the result, other than we know that obviously the decision was favourable to the legislative changes that were made in 1986.

Mr. Toth: — And that decision at that time was to establish fee-for-service to be paid by the physicians to the SMA for services rendered on their behalf. What kind of services would the SMA perform on behalf of its membership, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The SMA negotiates with government. They negotiate fee increases on behalf of their members. They also lobby government on behalf of their members and other physicians for other benefits such as continuing medical education fund and incentives to enhance the provision of services in rural and remote areas. And they meet with the minister and government officials reasonably regularly with respect to legislative changes like this or The Health Facilities Licensing Act or other pieces of legislation. And they provide input as the official voice for purposes of membership advancement of the medical profession.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying, this self-governing body that's been regulated by statute . . . And coming back to a comment made by the member from Arm River a few moments ago, and it was the same thing that was going through my mind, is the fact that we have an organization here that basically has

the ability to collect fees from all its members whether or not its members are totally in agreement with what they're doing. Whereas . . . and I believe the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) has the same thing and lawyers the same thing.

And I just find it interesting when some of these groups, the biggest proponents of the democratic process and free enterprise, seem to have to go and find agreements through statute to form organizations so that they can indeed derive the revenues to manage their associations; whereas groups like the Western Canadian Wheat Growers or you mentioned the farmers union or some of these groups are basically . . . operate on a voluntary basis. Those who are really concerned get involved and pay their membership dues.

What does the SMA do to make sure that it is indeed working with its membership and what does the government do . . . When you sit down with the SMA — SMA comes with some requests for some changes or you go to them for some changes — how do you know whether or not those changes or suggestions are coming from the membership at large or maybe what ends up kind of as the directorship making those decisions?

I think if you were to ask the rank and file across this province of the membership involved in many unions, a lot of them would not have much of an idea on many occasions of what is really being proposed by the leadership that are quite a bit removed from them.

And I think the concern here is as well that we have an association that is effectively representing its membership. The fact that there was about a third of the members voted, you have to wonder whether or not some of the members were not happy with some of the suggestions brought forward; whether they were not consulted, therefore they didn't take the time to vote; or they just were too busy and decided it's a foregone conclusion so I'll let somebody else do the voting for me.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well it's very difficult to say why they didn't vote. But I appreciate the point the member is making. Of course this applies no matter with what organization you're dealing with — whether government or opposition political parties; whether it's SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) or SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) or the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) or the STF or the SMA or the college of physicians and surgeons.

The suggestion is often made that well they're not really speaking for the membership, they're speaking for themselves. And yet we're all in the position where most of the time we have to just assume that when we're dealing with the duly constituted leaders of an organization that it speaks for the organization, and that if it strays too far from what the grass roots of that organization believe, then indeed the leadership of the organization will be changed in due course.

I appreciate the point the member is making, but I think that's just part of life.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, you gave out some numbers of physicians who are on a fee for service and the amount that they pay to the Saskatchewan Medical Association, also salaried physicians. And I just don't recall the numbers you gave. I don't know if you gave directly how many physicians on a fee for service who would be making payments and how many are salaried.

The numbers as well . . . I think you said something in the 860-some dollars, a person who's on a fee for service, and a salaried person is 500-and-some dollars. I'm wondering if you could reiterate those numbers, please.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Certainly. The fees are, fee-for-service physicians, \$866.25; salaried physicians, \$530.62. And the number of members who are voluntary members of the SMA is 1,276, of which 1,166 are fee-for-service physicians and 110 are non-fee-for-service.

So it's 1,166 plus 110 for a total of 1,276 physicians who belong to the SMA as members. Non-members are 167 fee for service and 130 non-fee-for-service, for a total of 297. And if you add those two numbers up, you get 1,573 which is the total number of physicians.

(1215)

Going back to the non-fee-for-service physicians, there are 240, of which 110 are voluntary members, 130 are not members.

Now it may be . . . One thing to keep in mind is that up until the present time the non-fee-for-service physicians have not had to pay dues. Now that the dues will be deducted if this legislation's passed . . . As for the fee for service, they may decide that since — actually it's 75 per cent of the fee I believe that is deducted and paid — they may voluntarily pay the other 25 per cent so that they too will become members which may explain the discrepancy in terms of the percentage of physicians that are members and not members as between the fee for service and the non-fee-for-service, if you follow me.

So it'll be interesting a year from now to see if many more of the non-fee-for-service become members of the SMA as a result of the fact that they will in effect be paying three-quarters of the fee in any event.

Mr. Toth: — So, Mr. Minister, basically what you're saying is that every physician does . . . Or is it the department pays part of the fee for the non-members? And I guess the question I do have, Mr. Minister, I didn't realize we had part of the physicians in the province on a fee for service and some salaries, and I'm wondering where would the salaried positions come in? Are those some of the specific speciality services that are available? Or where does the salary position come in that would explain this number here?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Many physicians work for district health boards in hospitals on a salary, and they may be general practitioners or they may be specialists. In some cases, districts will want to attract a specialist, but the volume of work will not be there to offer specialists the income that the specialist wants,

so the district may enter into an agreement with the specialist for a certain salary. This is common, I think, or more common with radiologists and pathologists for example. So they may be on salary.

There may also be general practitioners who work for district health boards and prefer to be on salary as opposed to fee for services.

Mr. Toth: — So coming back to the question of fees, does every physician pay the fees? Or from the numbers we've got here, there's a number of physicians who don't pay the fees totally or just pay partial fees.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. The physicians who are members, the numbers I gave you for membership numbers, they pay voluntarily because they have chosen to be members. And the government does not pay those fees or direct anybody else to pay them.

Those who are non-members, the ones who are fee-for-service, the government pays three-quarters of the membership fee to the SMA. So that if you're a fee-for-service physician and you choose not to be a member of the SMA, we would presently take three-quarters of the membership fee out of the money that we would pay you from the medical care insurance branch for senior patients and we would give that money to the SMA. You're not a member, but we're paying them three-quarters of the membership fee.

That is the system that was brought in in 1986 for fee-for-service physicians. Today what we're proposing is that with respect to a physician on salary, we will do the same thing. You may choose not to be a member, but we will pay the SMA three-quarters of the membership fee on the theory that they are doing some things that are of benefit to you as a physician.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're saying in this piece of . . . this amendment basically is covering everyone. And the other question I would have is when you're talking about the fee that you're paying, what are you paying that? Are you paying that over and above fees or funds that they would receive for services rendered? Or is that just taken off of the fee that would normally go to that doctor, which means they're basically paying it indirectly, you're just taking it out of their pocket before you send them a cheque.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That's correct.

Mr. Toth: — So did you ask the medical association whether or not they were in agreement with that when you talked about paying these fees on their behalf? Did the doctors ask for that? Is that how they asked for it to be paid? Or is it just something that was unilaterally decided between government and the SMA?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well no, this was asked for by the SMA. With respect to both the fee for service, they had a referendum in 1986 — and those are the numbers I couldn't give you in your first question — and they asked, do you want this to be done? And the majority of those who voted said yes, we do.

Maybe some didn't vote, but that's just way things go.

In this case, the same principle is being extended today 10 years later to the non-fee-for-service. Similarly, there was a referendum of the 240 non-fee-for-service physicians where we sent out, or the SMA actually sent out a ballot to each one of the 240 giving them the opportunity to vote yes or no, and then we would be bound by the result of that referendum; 103 of 240 actually returned their ballots. Of those 103, 71 said they were in favour, which amounts to 70 per cent of those who voted, and the number of those who voted is 40-some per cent.

But that's how they were consulted. Similar to what happened in '86 with respect to the fee-for-service physicians.

Mr. Toth: — So what you were saying, this last ballot that went out went to the non-members to seek their input with regards to this specific piece of legislation in front of us.

And also, Mr. Minister, another question. Do physicians have the opportunity as individuals, especially the non-members who haven't voluntarily got involved, do they have the ability to, as we see in many other organizations, to voluntarily request that these fees not be deducted or that they receive those fees back?

I know on some of the agricultural settings where there's a membership fee, that is automatically deducted. In many cases members have the ability if they really don't want to make that fee, they can apply for and have a refund of that fee that was made voluntarily — not voluntarily, but just taken right off — unilaterally deducted whether it's off a grain cheque or a livestock, like a check-off in many of the agricultural sectors.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, they do not have that ability. This legislation, like the previous legislation, makes it mandatory that they have to make a contribution of three-quarters of the membership fee indirectly, by government directing that it be paid, and they don't have the ability to opt out of that system.

Mr. Toth: — So the fees are now collected just directly via deduction from a physician's cheque. A physician doesn't basically cut a cheque to the SMA other than, I think you used the figure of 75 and 25 per cent. Now if I gather correctly, then the 75 per cent is deducted directly off payment. The member then cuts a cheque for the other 25 per cent, the voluntary members, whereas the non-voluntary and the non-members do not send that 25 per cent. Is that what I'm understanding?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, that's not correct, and I may not have been totally clear about it. To go back to the number of members, there are 1,573 physicians in the province; 1,276 of those are members of the SMA. Nothing is deducted by government on behalf of those 1,276 because they make the payment voluntarily. They pay the entire membership fee themselves, okay?

There are 297 physicians who choose not to be members of the SMA and they do not have to become members of the SMA. But with respect to them, the government pays three-quarters of what would be their membership fee to the SMA in lieu of the membership, and now we do that for fee-for-service physicians.

This Bill would extend the same principle to non-fee-for-service physicians.

And so we would end up, right now, we're paying for 167 physicians. We're paying the three-quarter membership fee directly to the SMA. This would extend that to the 130 physicians who are non-fee-for-service physicians and paying nothing to the SMA. This would mean that we would pay three-quarters of the membership fee to the SMA on behalf of each of those 130 physicians, the other 110 having already agreed to voluntarily make the payment.

Mr. Toth: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. So as I understand it correctly now, all members, voluntary members or full members of the SMA, make the payment directly on their behalf. The government doesn't make any contribution. Whereas previous to this amendment . . . once this amendment goes through, all members are now going to be . . . or the government's going to cover the 75 per cent that you were just doing for the fee-for-service physicians. The fee-for-service physicians you were paying 75 per cent and the non-members were covering the 25 per cent, but the salaried physicians were not paying anything. There wasn't a payment made of any kind, and this present legislation is going to address that.

Now does that mean that the salaried physicians will automatically pay the 25 per cent or they can still choose not to?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — They could still choose not to, if they chose not to be members.

Mr. Toth: — And as for the fee-for-service physicians, the non-members as well may or may not make that payment. They're in the position where the government pays 75 per cent, but the 25 per cent may or may not be paid. Is that correct?

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

Mr. Toth: — For the individuals who are not members of the SMA, are there services that they may lose because they are not members? Or are there any services that they would not receive as a result of not being members?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I can't say. I would imagine there probably are, because there are probably member services that don't pertain to government that are provided, you know, to members of the SMA. But the theory of this legislation is that people who are not members benefit from some of the services in terms of the work that the SMA does on their behalf. And that's why it's thought that they should also share in the expense.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I think you're aware of the fact that there are many jurisdictions in many areas of the province . . . many small communities and certainly health districts are faced with that question now as we've amalgamated into the larger service districts, where communities and districts are having a hard time trying to entice, if you will, or trying to encourage or trying to get doctors to come and look at their communities.

And I was at a couple public meetings in the last little while

where people were raising that question because they had an understanding in their community. And certainly it was a real concern, the fact that they didn't have physicians available; a physician had left the community. In some cases there was one physician had been in the community for a number of years, had left, had gone on or moved. And a couple situations where circumstances were that the person had actually retired, and now the community is left without a service.

Have you found that there are districts or communities that have looked at this fee that is being deducted, and the fee to the SMA, the districts themselves have actually decided to pick it up and offer it as a service that they would perform on behalf of physicians if they would come and practise in that community or in that district?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I don't know of that occurring, but there certainly would be nothing stopping it from occurring. If a district, because of the population, the number of patients, decides it needs to enhance a physician's income in various ways, the district would be free to do that. And in fact I think although the number of rural practitioners has been relatively stable over the last five years, I believe that what the member is saying is valid, and I think we probably will see different arrangements arrived at by districts to make sure that we have appropriate physician resources in some parts of the province.

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 92 and Bill No. 77.

The Assembly recessed until 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens of the city of Melville and surrounding small communities with respect to the closure of the court-house in Melville. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to close the Melville court-house; and that your hon. Assembly withhold decisions for further reductions to the Melville residents until fair input is provided by the community.

The signatures come from the citizens of Melville, Fenwood, Bangor, Neudorf, and Goodeve, Mr. Speaker. There are 806 signatures on this petition. I so present.

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

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

The communities of people have signed the petition from are mostly from Moosomin, Redvers, and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The names that are on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Kayville, Avonlea, Esterhazy, and other centres throughout the province. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions of names from 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 Swift Current, from Regina, from Raymore, and Bengough. 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:

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

In addition to signatures, of course, from Regina, I see names from Carlyle, Indian Head, Saltcoats, Yorkton, Edenwold, Grenfell, Canora, and Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The people that have signed this petition are all from Regina.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by a great number of concerned citizens, in particular from the resort community of Regina Beach, as well as from Lumsden; and I notice there's also a great number of signatures from the city of Regina.

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, Mr. Speaker:

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

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Wilcox, Francis, White City, and Regina. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased as well to rise and present petitions to the Assembly, petitions addressing the conditions of the highways in this province. And this one specifically deals with the Highway No. 1, and I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure

program toward double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating those funds towards capital construction projects in this province.

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

And as I indicated yesterday, the petitions I have in front of me are signed by individuals from the Carnduff, Carievale, Shaunavon, Frontier, and Swift Current areas of the province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present on behalf of the people of south-west Saskatchewan the following petition, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in this province.

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

These folks are mostly from the town of Shaunavon, Mr. Speaker, as well as of course, Orkney, Eastend, and surrounding communities. And these were gathered by the school children of Shaunavon and I'm happy to present them on their behalf.

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 allocate adequate funding to the double-laning of Highway No 1; and

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and the members of the Assembly, Mr. Manley McLachlan from the Saskatchewan Construction Association.

As you're aware, the construction association has been working with us in trying to get the unfortunate Crown Construction Tendering Agreement repealed, and I would just hope that Manley would be here today to see the minister withdraw this unfortunate legislation.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to

introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Mrs. Yetta Cohen who is in the west gallery.

She is I think this week celebrating her 80th birthday and she's visiting us here in Saskatchewan from Randolph, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Boston. She's visiting with my constituents, Bernie and Jennifer Cohen.

Let's have a warm welcome for Mrs. Cohen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize people that are seated in your gallery. This is a young couple, a young family from the city of Yorkton. But the two people that I am introducing, the parents are originally from Invermay and I had the pleasure I think of being the teacher of both of them.

I'd like to introduce Kelly and Joy Shewchuk and their young son Tyson. I hope you enjoy your afternoon in the legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Education, I'd like to introduce some people seated in your gallery today. I have the pleasure to introduce two recipients of the John M. Thompson fellowship program for 1996. They were nominated because of their commitment to teachers in their country and their willingness to utilize the experience and knowledge gained to organize training and professional development programs.

The general objectives of the fellowship program are, firstly, to provide participants with an orientation to the Canadian education system and teacher organizations; secondly, to promote the development of leadership skills; and thirdly, to provide teachers with practical training in different aspects of teacher associations.

The program will be held in the month of June and will consist of an orientation, workshops, and such areas as communications, program and planning, proposal development, budgeting and evaluation, and visits to member organizations.

The Thompson Fellowship program for teachers provides a wonderful opportunity for teachers around the world to share information and expertise.

In May, 1996 the Government of Saskatchewan announced the public consultation process regarding structuring change in the 21st century. Teachers play a vital role in determining what Saskatchewan's future education system will look like, and I would like to ask the guests today to rise as I introduce you.

I first would introduce Mrs. Geeta Verma, of the All India Primary Teachers' Federation of India, and Ms. Marion M. Liburd of the Nevis Teachers' Union of the West Indies. And accompanying them, the two visitors, is Mr. Herb Haidl, the president of the Catholic section of the SSTA (Saskatchewan

School Trustees Association).

I welcome you here today and ask the members of the Assembly, through you, Mr. Speaker, to welcome them here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I too want to welcome Manley McLachlan to the Legislative Assembly, the representative of the Saskatchewan Construction Association. And I wish you well during one of the more interesting times for the Saskatchewan Construction Association, Mr. McLachlan. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We too would like to join the other members in welcoming Manley McLachlan to the Assembly, representing the Saskatchewan Construction Association. Manley has taken the spot that Jim Chase — well-known to most of us — used to have. And we're happy to have worked over the past four years with his association, with Jim, and now with Manley, and we're looking forward to more pleasant days ahead as we work towards bringing about a fair and reasonable union-preference tendering policy in this province. And of course that's of interest to not only the people that head these organizations but also to the 80 per cent of the construction workers of this province who are not unionized, and of course the 20 per cent who are. And we hope that you are successful in your endeavours to find fair play in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, behind me in the west gallery we have a group of students — 21, I believe — from Glenavon School, grades 5 and 6, attended by their teacher Henry Huck, I believe; hopefully I've got that pronounced right; Cynthia Gilewicz and Lucy Gordon are chaperons as well as Norman Pander and Beverly Hazell.

And it's certainly a pleasure to have you taking the time to come and visit the Assembly and I look forward to just having a moment with you afterwards for some pictures. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise and welcome a group of 27 grade 2 and 3 students seated in your gallery. These students are here from Deshaye School and it is a pleasure to welcome them. I should note that there are also . . . there's a student on the floor of the Assembly behind the bar who is also from that class at Deshaye. And I would ask that all members join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Communities Hit By Storm

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I would like to send our best wishes to all those families across Saskatchewan who are cleaning up storm damage from yesterday and overnight. Reports from Environment Canada show that four tornadoes were spotted in the Kindersley, Kyle, Eastend, and Morse areas. Other areas got hit with winds gusting over 160 kilometres per hour, not to mention extremely heavy rain and hail. This morning many farmers are out surveying the damage on their upcoming crops. Others are calculating the damage to their property and buildings. Thankfully no one was hurt.

It only takes one storm like this, Mr. Speaker, to remind us just how powerful mother nature is and how powerless we all are. It is our hope that government officials are working closely with storm victims to assist them in every way possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Awards

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Tourism creates over a billion dollars to our provincial economy every year and is responsible for more than 40,000 jobs in Saskatchewan.

The Prince Albert region is a major player in all of this and recently our community honoured businesses and individuals who have made a significant contribution to this industry at the second annual Prince Albert Tourism Awards.

Athabaska Airways was chosen as Prince Albert's Tourism Business of the Year. The manager of marketing and sales for Athabaska, Ken Gould, says tourism traffic is the most important component of their business. Also nominated for this award were Prince Albert Northern Bus Lines and the South Hill Inn. The Tourism Organization of the Year Award went to The Broadway North Theatre Company for its sell-out musical production of *West Side Story*.

Wanda Carter, sales and conference director for the Marlboro Inn, was presented with the Tourism Individual of the Year honours. The Tourism Volunteer of the Year Award went to Bill Smiley for his long-term dedication to the Prince Albert Historical Society. The Carlton branch of the TD (Toronto Dominion) Bank received the Customer Service Award of Excellence of a business.

And the staff of Diefenbaker House, Nicole Pelletier, Tanya Danylyshen, Tanya Trofimuk, and Danielle Simonot were presented with the Public Sector Customer Service Award; and in the business category, Sherry Chatlain, an employee at the Coronet Motor Inn, received the Customer Service Award.

Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, to all of the recipients of these important awards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Western Canada Farm Progress Show

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the thousands of people from across Saskatchewan, and from across Canada, as well as visitors from outside Canada, who will be attending the Western Canada Farm Progress Show that's on this week in Regina starting tomorrow.

The farm progress show of course has gained an international reputation for being a showcase of the best agriculture technology in the world. It is a true reflection of the attributes of our rural entrepreneurs from all across Canada, Mr. Speaker, and of course highlighting those entrepreneurs from rural Saskatchewan.

It also has an outstanding attendance because of the amount of business information that it provides for other entrepreneurs to view, as well as farmers like myself that enjoy looking at some of this new technology and methods.

I wish to extend to all the people that will be attending a welcome to Saskatchewan and to Regina as well. I hope that of course that the weather will cooperate so that it's a successful venture. A lot of work has gone into this from the organizers who certainly deserve a pat on the back, and certainly for all the exhibitors that will be attending as well, that the attendance is up so that they can enjoy a successful year again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Bovine Tribute to the Speaker

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As all members on all sides of this House know, I have a great deal of respect for this Chamber, and I would never, ever want to be accused of breaking the rules in here. I might bend them, massage them occasionally, even torture them, but I would never wittingly break the rules.

So since I know it's against the rules to exhibit non-parliamentary items, I would ask the pages to confiscate this plastic cow and deliver it to you, Mr. Speaker. You will note that it is a cow. Even I know that there's no bull allowed in here. You will also note that it's a black and white cow, Mr. Speaker, bearing a certain resemblance to your sartorial splendour and to your black and white decisions — decisions that have udderly impressed all members of this House.

On behalf of all MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), I present you now with this plastic wind-up walking cow. It should remind you of your decision made a couple of years ago when you were on a CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) junket in England. As I recall what you said when you returned to Canada, you were so impressed with the British parliament that it was then you decided to stand for Speaker.

Now it's a very special cow we're giving you, Mr. Speaker. It's not a mad cow. Rather it's a token of appreciation by all

members for the judicious, calm, almost bovine equanimity you have displayed during this session. I'm sure you didn't really anticipate all the beef we'd cook up or the rules we'd milk when we MLAs were herded together at the start of the session for the historical first vote for Speaker in this House.

Whether you've been dealing with the rump roast back bench, the sirloin tip cabinet, the tenderloin opposition, or the ground round third party, you've kept the beef and bull to a minimum. Mr. Speaker, you've never been a cow-ard in your rulings. We have no beef with you. You're a prime cut and we congratulate you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Santa Claus Theme Park for Watson

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend the people of Watson on their efforts to create a major tourist attraction in our town. The people of Watson will raise \$12,000 to build a 25-foot cement statue of Santa Claus. Watson historians want to stake claim to being the original home of the Santa Claus Day.

History shows that in 1932 a local merchant had an idea to make Christmas more fun for children so he organized a type of Santa Claus Day. Of course the idea spread throughout the world. After that the community is considering building a Santa Claus theme park and constructing some permanent Christmas decorations.

I would like to congratulate Bill Chyz for his hard work in organizing the committee work on the statue, and invite all members to our town where we celebrate the Christmas feeling all year round.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Summer Theatre in Weyburn

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, this summer an important piece of Saskatchewan history will be revisited through the performing arts in Weyburn. August 10 will mark the premiere performance of *That'll Be The Day*, the life of Tommy Douglas.

Most appropriately, it will be held at the T.C. Douglas Calvary Centre in Weyburn, the restored church in which Mr. Douglas served as minister, now dedicated in his memory as a performing arts centre.

The play is a new, original work by Ken Mitchell, the nationally known Saskatchewan dramatist. It is lively and uplifting, befitting both the spirit of Mr. Douglas, the humanitarian, visionary, and inspirational leader.

That'll Be The Day will be directed by Ron Ror, a talented, well-known, and respected artist. Mr. Ror bears the unique distinction of having had a very special speaker at his high school graduation in Goodwater — namely, Mr. Douglas himself.

The play will star Nova Scotian-born actor, Gordon Gammie, who recently won strong reviews in the lead role of a play based on the Westray mining disaster. Gammie will be supported by a small cast and some roles will be filled by Weyburn community actors.

Signal Hill Theatre is a completely new entity and the brainchild of the city of Weyburn tourism committee. The theatre's mandate is to attract visitors to Weyburn and south-eastern Saskatchewan and to utilize the Douglas Centre facility. This first summer theatre endeavour is done in association with the staff from the Souris Valley Theatre in nearby Estevan. This type of cooperation could serve as a model for others to follow in theatre and tourism.

Mr. Speaker, I invite everyone to visit Weyburn this August to enjoy first-class theatre. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is an irreversible disease of the nervous system.

ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) killed Lou Gehrig, one of the greatest baseball players of all time, and it also killed David Niven, the actor.

The blue cornflower is the official emblem of the ALS society and each year the ALS Society of Saskatchewan runs a campaign with these flowers to raise funds for medical research and to raise awareness of this disease.

The life expectancy of a person with ALS is about three years. During this time, patients slowly lose muscle function until they are no longer able to speak, eat, or move. Eventually most patients will suffocate as the muscles that allow them to breathe cease to function. It is a devastating illness for those which have it and there is no cure that has yet been found.

ALS also has an impact on the patients' families, consuming their financial and emotional resources.

There is some hope for people with ALS. Scientific research in Canada has been proceeding at an accelerating rate: 10 projects are now in progress; new drugs are being tested; advances in knowledge about other nervous system diseases may shed some light on the cause and a cure for ALS.

I would encourage all members to visit or call their local ALS society or provide support to their local chapter. They do need your support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave, to revert back to the introduction of guests who are here for a short time.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Moosomin has requested leave to introduce guests and I believe that his guests will not be here when we reach orders of the day. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, 45 students from McLeod/Churchill Elementary School in the community of Moosomin. They are attended today by their teachers, Mrs. Pam Foy, Mrs. Shannon Windrim, and Ms. Lana Miskamin.

We'd certainly like to welcome you to the Assembly and we trust that you'll enjoy your trip to the city today, and welcome very much. Have a good day.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Funding

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a scene that may be played out in countless communities over the coming months is now taking place in Canora. The town is going to court to prevent the closure of six acute care beds and to seek funding to maintain a safe and proper level of health care.

Mr. Speaker, Canora residents are upset, and rightly so, about the fact that they have to take legal action to maintain a safe health care system. However, they are also concerned about the fact that they are being pitted against the communities of Preeceville and Kamsack for health care dollars. The situation is so severe that many residents are now boycotting businesses in these neighbouring towns.

Will the Minister of Health explain what solution he has to address this growing problem, a problem that his government has created by underfunding our rural health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — As the member knows, Mr. Speaker, the matter is currently before the courts, and I'm not going to comment on the legal proceedings that are in front of the court.

But I want to say to the member that I believe that the best place for the controversy to be resolved is at the community level. And I have every confidence, Mr. Speaker, that people acting reasonably and in good faith will see to it that proper health services are provided to the people of Canora and the residents of all communities within the Assiniboine Valley Health District.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to further demonstrate what my colleague from Canora-Pelly has stated, and I have received a letter from the town of Kamsack, and I'd like to send a copy to the Minister of Health.

This letter reads, and I quote:

When health districts are being told they have too many acute care beds in the district, in many cases the outlying areas are not being considered, and the decision to close beds below a potentially safe level pits community against community.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government is poisoning the atmosphere of cooperation that has existed in this region for decades. The town of Kamsack is calling on the minister to give more autonomy to health boards and not hamstringing them through funding cuts and restrictive regulations.

Will the minister make these commitments in this House today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Of course, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the only funding cuts there have been to health care in Saskatchewan this year, have been those cuts imposed by the federal Liberals.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals have withdrawn \$47 million from health care spending in Saskatchewan this year. And what this government has done in light of that is to replace every single dime that they have taken out, Mr. Speaker. Undoubtedly, for all of us in government and municipal government and in health districts, there are tight finances, Mr. Speaker, but I remain convinced that the appropriate number of hospital beds exist in Preeceville, Kamsack, and Canora, to meet the health care needs of the people in the district, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Fort Qu'Appelle is another community in which this government's underfunding of the health care system has had a drastic effect. The Fort Qu'Appelle Hospital is suing the local health district because this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has failed to provide the local district with appropriate funding. And because of the actions of the government, Lestock and the other nearby communities such as Balcarres are concerned that the outcome of such court action could impact their funding.

The minister fails to acknowledge the fact that his actions and those of his government are pitting community against community. Mr. Speaker, at what point is the minister prepared to properly fund the rural health care system? In other words, when can rural people expect a health care system based on common sense, and not on dollars and cents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, we have a very good health care system in the province of Saskatchewan; a health care system that is the envy of people around the world. But the problem the Leader of the Opposition has, Mr. Speaker, is that when he takes the side of one institution within the health district that he represents, as he has in this House — he mentions Lestock and Balcarres — when he says that one institution should get more and takes sides as between that institution and the health board, he must recognize, Mr. Speaker, that that may have an impact on Lestock and Balcarres.

It is best, Mr. Speaker, that these matters be resolved at the local level. It is best that that member not politically interfere with decisions that should properly be made between the health board and the Indian hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when Louise Simard travelled Saskatchewan a few years ago promoting this government's so-called wellness approach, she promised that health care decisions would be brought back to the local level. She promised renewed cooperation between the NDP government and Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues from Canora-Pelly, Saltcoats, and Melville have demonstrated, this government has shown absolutely nothing in the way of cooperation. Instead, the NDP has drastically reduced funding, and the quality of health care in rural communities has sagged.

This government now sits back and watches communities battle district health boards for more funding, pitting community against community, people against people. Even worse, communities are being pitted against each other for the valuable health dollars — they're being pitted simply for money, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister explain what happened to the cooperative spirit that this government promised, and will the minister make a commitment to properly fund rural health care so as to clear up the atmosphere of cooperation that he and his government has poisoned?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — What the cooperative spirit means to me, Mr. Speaker, among other things, is that we in society will cooperate one with another to jointly finance our health care system. It does not mean, as that member has advocated in this House, that we should move to an American-style, two-tiered system, pay as you go, where the rich . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — . . . where the rich get a better form of health care than the poor, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is that despite the fearmongering by the Liberal Party, we have a good health care system, Mr. Speaker. And what they are complaining about . . . for example, the member from Melfort

complains that the Melfort Union Hospital has gone from 80 hospital beds to 40. He doesn't tell people that the average daily census in Melfort is 32. He doesn't do that, Mr. Speaker.

The number of hospital beds we have in Melfort and elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, is quite adequate to meet the health care needs of the people of the province, and so is the number of nursing home beds, Mr. Speaker. Because we have one of the best health care systems in the world and we're going to keep our medicare system despite the opposition of that party over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A five-year-old boy from my constituency was using the services of a speech therapist until this government cut back on health care funding. Now the therapist is shared between the North-East and the Central Plains Health District, meaning the young man can only get therapy if there is a cancellation. He hasn't had a session since Christmas.

I'm not going to ask the Health minister why this is happening because he'll just pass the buck to the federal government, or he'll blame Tory mismanagement, or he'll blame the district health board's choices. What I am going to ask him though, is to admit that his government considers rural Saskatchewan people to be second-class citizens; that your government has decided that rural Saskatchewan doesn't deserve a decent standard of health and that it is part of your long-term plan to decimate rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member of course has not provided me with any information about the case she's referring to. And if the member is concerned about the situation, I would ask the member to send me some information. Because I assure the member and I assure the House, that I would want to look into that situation and respond to the member in a proper way.

But I want to say to the member that we do have a good health care system. We do believe in rural Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, our belief in rural Saskatchewan is going to mean that we're not going to go to an American-style health care system such as that member who just spoke, by the way, has advocated in this House. Because such a system, Mr. Speaker, would not be to the benefit of rural people, urban people, or any of the people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) or his designate. Mr. Minister, I know your party and the Liberals were planning on wrapping up this session and getting out of here today, but it isn't going to happen. We have no intention — we have no intention — we have no intention of letting this

session end until you release your Crown tendering review and indicate what changes you plan to make in light of this flawed policy.

And by the way, we want the report that's already written. We want the report that's already written, not the one that you're going to cook up in the next few days to try and make this policy look good.

Mr. Minister, a simple question. Will you release that report today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take this question on behalf of the government. The Minister of Labour, and the House Leader, and other ministers who have answered this and similar questions in the past few days on behalf of the government, have indicated to the members of the House that there is no written report that has been prepared thus far respecting the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement). And the reason for that is very simple.

There has been a series of stakeholders' meetings involving the SCA (Saskatchewan Construction Association), the CLRA (Construction Labour Relations Association), and the construction unions involved, with a view to working out what possible workable arrangements are available to us. And we found out yesterday that those talks have broken off.

In the consequence, if that condition continues, a report will have to be obviously prepared by the CIC people summarizing what's taken place. And I dare say officials are looking at it now.

Our hope is, Mr. Speaker . . . in fact as Premier, I would call on all of the parties to get together again — all of the parties to get together again sometime this week, next week — to take another concerted effort to see as to what can be done to make this policy, which is after all trying to right the wrongs implemented by the former administration . . . to right those wrongs and make a workable policy for all of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, what are you talking about, there's no report? On May 8 in this House the Minister of Labour said and I quote:

. . . we feel that the review is almost concluded and that we'll have a report very shortly.

On May 10 the Minister of Labour said:

We expect the review of the . . . (CCTA) will be concluded by the end of the month. At that time, the member, as all . . . (of) Saskatchewan (knows), will be privileged to know what the results of the review have been.

On May 21 the Minister said:

. . . we expect to have a report sometime near the end of the month. And when that report is released, the member along with the rest of the public in Saskatchewan, will know the results of the review of the . . . (CCTA).

That's what he said then. And today, Mr. Premier, you stand in this House and say there is no report and there never was a report. There's a report all right, Mr. Premier, you just don't want to release it because it says this policy is a disaster. Mr. Premier, will you do the right thing here and release that report that you know is in existence?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the House should be reminded again, and told again, that the difficulty which all of us face with respect to CCTA has been occasioned as a result of nine years of deliberate policy by the former Conservative administration, which was intended, in cold, blunt terms, to cut out all contractors who had unionized workers from any of the construction tendering of the government of the day. This was an inequity.

In the consequence, we determined to implement something which we thought was more equitable called the CCTA. In the consequence, there is further demand that the CCTA be reviewed and all of the statements that the member refers to are totally consistent with what I said in the first answer. The interim report, which is the result of the failed negotiations, will be prepared and will be released at some appropriate time. But keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the discussions only terminated temporarily, I would say, yesterday.

I again say that it is the objective of the government, it is my request as Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, that the SCA, the CLRA, the construction trade unions, get together in the absence of any preconceived report by the Government of Saskatchewan, or by anybody else, and to try to work out in the spirit of compromise a fair, workable arrangement for all working men and women in all construction companies in the province of Saskatchewan. It can be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, on June 4, the minister responsible for CIC wrote to Manley McLachlan, the Saskatchewan Construction Association. And I have a copy of the letter right here. It says, and I quote:

The results of the CIC's review of the CCTA have not been shared with anyone outside of government. If the results of the review and our current recommendations were released, it would likely prejudice the current discussions taking place. As a result, it is not our intention to release anything until such time as your discussion have reached a conclusion.

Well they've reached a conclusion yesterday, Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier, this letter confirms that there is a report and that the report makes recommendations. It also says that the report will be released once negotiations between the two sides have

concluded and that's taken place.

Mr. Premier, I think you've been caught on this. You can't stand there and deny that there is a report that exists when you wrote . . . when the minister responsible wrote about it in a letter to the construction association here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Premier, will you release the report and the recommendations today as promised in this letter to the Saskatchewan Construction Association?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the Leader of the Third Party just refuses to listen to the answer and doggedly and religiously sticks to the written question which has been prepared for him to read.

I repeat again to the Leader of the Third Party, how could there be a report since there were stakeholders' meetings which took place involving the SCA, the CLRA, and the trade unions, up until yesterday? How could there be anything except an intention to summarize — hopefully, we thought — the successful completion of those negotiations, or in the absence of a successful completion, some other report on the consequence?

We say, I say, the words "interim report" because what we hope is as what I've said in the first two questions — I repeat again — that the parties involved here will come back around the table and to solve this problem in the best interests of working men and women.

I repeat, Saskatchewan people in this province don't want a so blatantly right-wing, anti-union approach that the former Conservative administration and this caucus advocates. They want a fair wage policy which is applicable to unionized workers, non-unionized workers, and construction people. The CCTA holds the germs of that. It bears the possibility of that.

I say to the parties, get back around the table and let's take one more crack at working out a solution. If not, the government will take its responsibilities in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, the real reason you can't release that report is because it is very damning on your government and the policy that you brought in. And also the problem is, is you've entered into a contract with the unionized contractors of this province. That's the problem here.

The negotiation process was doomed right from the start because the unions never had any intention of allowing any changes. And why should they, Mr. Premier? You gave them a sweetheart deal just prior to the last election, and then you gave them a veto over any changes for the next five years.

The only way to fix this thing, Mr. Premier, is to scrap the whole policy entirely and start over again with all parties at the table. We have introduced a private members' Bill that would

do just that, Mr. Premier. Will you pass that piece of legislation today so that we can work on creating a new, fair tendering policy for the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the new, fair tendering policy by the new PCs (Progressive Conservative) translates to the old PC policy of attacking trade union men and women, as they did from 1982 to 1991. That legislation is not a fair tendering policy that even the Saskatchewan Construction Association would buy. That Bill that these Conservatives have tabled in the House is a Bill which would make Saskatchewan Alabama North.

That is a piece of legislation which would reduce our working men and women to the lowest common denominator in terms of wages and opportunities. Not even the SCA employers, good as they are, even with their differences that they may have with this government and the CCTA idea proposal — they wouldn't buy that.

And the Hon. Leader of the Conservative Party asks me to get up and to say to the people of Saskatchewan that I'm going to turn the clock back to the day when they almost bankrupted the province, to the day when they brought shame to working men and women in the province. I say, never. We have been elected to provide fairness and opportunity and compassion, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Environment Department Office Closures

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question as well, and this one I'm directing to the minister responsible for Environment and Resource Management.

Mr. Minister, can you confirm that your department is planning on closing 16 district offices throughout the province, including the Moosomin district office? Can you provide us with a list of the offices to be closed? When will these closures take place? How many jobs are on the line?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I do not have a list of all of the district offices which will be affected with meeting our budget target this year, but I'll be happy to provide details to the hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again to the minister. Mr. Minister, would you not acknowledge that this is yet another attack on rural Saskatchewan? Virtually every government office in the community of Moosomin has been ripped out over the past few years, and now our conservation office is going, and how many others?

I'm looking forward to seeing that list that you're presenting. I'm sure that many other communities feel the same way that Moosomin is today.

Mr. Minister, why is this being done? Why are you and your government and this Premier continuing your attack on rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In due respect to the hon. member, we have to make these changes as we prepare for the 21st century, and the facts are that far more employees from my particular department have been laid off in urban centres than will be laid off in rural areas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Gambling

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my first question is for the Minister of Gaming. Gambling does not only affect the adults of this province; it is also affecting, and having a significant impact on, our youth. In fact a recent study of students aged 14 to 19 in Windsor, Ontario show that 90 per cent of adolescents were involved in gambling activity.

Another study by the Canadian foundation on gambling found that 37 per cent of adolescents in Ontario had some degree of problems with excessive gambling. And in Alberta 23 per cent of teens have been identified as problem gamblers or at risk of becoming addicted.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have the actual statistics in Saskatchewan yet, but there is no reason to believe that our youth are not having the same problems. Does this government have any plans to identify gambling problems among our youth, or are they just keeping their eyes focused on the huge profits it is bringing into their coffers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question, and the member from Humboldt for the question. I don't know where the member is getting her information from, but in Saskatchewan, young people, and she speaks about teenagers and adolescents, in this province under the age of 19 years of age, aren't permitted to gamble anywhere in this province. So I'm not sure where the member is getting her information from.

But what I would like to say to the member is that in this province we have set the standard across Canada for establishing the kinds of regulations and controls for people who are involved in gaming. And we have just recently, at a symposium in Regina, had people from across North America at this symposium who took the Saskatchewan model and will be implementing it across Canada and using that regulation as being the standard.

Because not only do we have regulations, strict regulations, and

control in this province, we have established as well how we distribute equity fairly across the province and have a very comprehensive education and treatment program in this province, unlike any other province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Incidentally, I got my information from the mental health association.

Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Education minister. Madam Minister, something needs to be done to help our youth before it's too late. We do not want to subject our youth to a lifetime of severe gambling problems. I understand that the provincial curriculum offers a segment on alcohol and other drug addictions for grade 7, 8, and 9 students, but it has not been updated since the 1980s.

Given these startling numbers about gaming problems, will the Minister of Education or her designate consider adding gaming addictions to the provincial curriculum, and in doing so, take the first step in helping to prevent our youth from this very serious social condition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to take my place today. I want to say to the member, Mr. Speaker, through you, that I've heard the question. She is quite correct, that there is a program in effect for some addictions. And without accepting the premiss for her question, I'll be glad to refer this question to the minister and she will in turn take it up with the appropriate authorities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 77 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act

Clause 1

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple more questions, Mr. Minister. You mentioned earlier about the agreement that's mentioned in this amendment with the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association). I'm wondering, in agreeing to bring forth this legislation on behalf of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, what did you offer in return?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is not easy, Mr. Chair, to answer the question simply, in the sense that this is one provision of an agreement that contains several provisions. But generally speaking, the framework agreement, with which I think the member has some familiarity, is the agreement that sets out

roles and responsibilities as between district health boards and physicians and ensures that physicians have the right to collective representation respecting financial issues, in terms and conditions of work. And it actually contains really a variety of measures.

So I would say that there isn't one measure in the agreement that is quid pro quo for this aspect of the agreement. This is part of a larger package.

Mr. McLane: — When you were discussing with the SMA, Mr. Minister, bringing forth this amendment Act, did you discuss things like capitation and rosterings and those types of issues, as to where your government was prepared to head in that respect and give some assurances to the SMA that indeed that would be slow in happening, that would indeed happen, or indeed it would not happen.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. In connection with this legislation there have been no such discussions. Because whether or not you change the method of payment of physicians does not hinge on this legislation.

Certainly I've had discussions with the board of the SMA on at least one occasion about fee for service versus capitation versus service contracts, but not in relation to this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. It may not have too much to do with this legislation. However, if the government of the day would have been reluctant to bring forth this, it could have caused some hardship, I would suggest, to the SMA in that they wouldn't be able to collect the fees from a great number of physicians that chose not to do it. So I'm wondering why that would not have been part of the discussion, or if indeed it was part of the discussion.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I've already indicated to the member that the general discussion of method of payment has not been specifically addressed with respect to this legislation. But indeed from the SMA's point of view, it is suffering a hardship right now because the fact is there are 15 per cent of the physicians approximately that are not on fee for service and with respect to whom the SMA is not receiving any payment for the services that, from their point of view, they are providing for all physicians.

Mr. McLane: — In the explanatory notes that accompanied this Bill, on the last page under the explanation of the new provision, item 4, it states, the proposed amendment involving section 47.1 extends the dues check-off provisions to non-fee-for-service physicians providing clinical/direct patient services. It goes on to state that this recognizes the ongoing shift to other, alternative methods of payment such as capitation and salary.

Now it would make me believe that those were part of the discussions. I know the minister has said they weren't. I guess I have a couple of questions in this regard.

The first one would be, personally, I haven't noticed a big shift

in the method of payment. I wonder if you could maybe give us a little background, Mr. Minister, as to the number of fee-for-service physicians, say in 1990 — maybe go back to 1980, '85, '90, and to present day.

(1430)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I don't have the specific numbers for the years that the member refers to, but I'm advised that the figure of about 15 per cent of the practising physicians being on non-fee-for-service has been more or less the same for the last five to seven years, and part of that, it might have been slightly lower. Probably not a dramatic change, but some change in the last 10 years, but not really all that dramatic; probably 15 per cent in the last five to seven years. And that's about as good as I can do at the moment.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, did you, when this legislation come forward, did you approve these explanatory notes?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well no, I must say I did not. I don't disapprove of them either, but I think I probably saw them at the same time that the member saw them as far as I can recall.

Mr. McLane: — Well thank you. I guess that would give rise to another question then as to when it makes mention of, when your department makes mention of, the ongoing shift, if there hasn't been that shift over the last 15 or 20 years, then you must be surmising that there's going to be one over the next five years. Could you deny that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I don't have any definitive idea that there would be such a shift. There's obviously been some shift. I mean you can debate whether a small shift is a shift or whether a shift has to be a large shift, as is implied in your question.

The point is, 15 per cent of the physicians are not on fee for service. The SMA is not getting any fee for the service that it might provide on behalf of those physicians. There are physicians that are expressing an interest in an alternative form of payment. There is no hidden plan, if that's what the member fears, at the present time.

But at the same time, I wouldn't deny that I've had discussions with physicians and others about changing the fee-for-service system, and that's something I think all governments should be looking at and indeed it's something that a national forum, as the member may know, is travelling across Canada to look at.

And indeed if we do change the system, then we will need a method by which people who are not paid on a fee-for-service will provide some compensation to the SMA. But it is not the intent of this legislation to facilitate that kind of change. This legislation is necessary to deal with the situation as it is in reality today, even as we speak, and as it has been for the last several years.

Mr. McLane: — I guess when we talk about the fee for service, Mr. Minister, and other alternatives, that's one thing. When we're talking capitation, that is indeed something else

and that word again is mentioned here. And it appears, according to what you're saying, is that indeed it is not your wish to actually pressure the doctors or some 1,500 doctors that we have in this province to alternative methods of payment. Although as you said, it is being reviewed right across Canada and that's probably most appropriate.

However, the concern that we might have, would be, that whether your government indeed is pressuring in that direction in terms of alternative methods, and in particular the capitation, which causes some problems which would indeed limit services to the people of the province.

Now maybe you don't have those ideas but maybe you could ask your department if that is the direction that they feel is appropriate for the medical group in this province.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well of course as minister I will be in charge of whatever it is we do. And I can only say that the member is correct — that different people have different ideas as to how doctors should be paid. There probably is no one model that one would go to. But in any event, whatever happens in the future with respect to the manner in which doctors are paid, will not really hinge one way or the other on the legislation that is before the House today.

Mr. McLane: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. But for my own curiosity, I wonder if I could get you to do a couple things in response to what I'm going to ask. And one would be to give us your definition of what you believe capitation means. And I guess as well, as it relates to the medical profession in this province, and in particular the 1,500 doctors. As well as, could you also give us your definition of what you believe rostering . . . as it pertains to the doctors this province needs.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as I'm sure the member knows . . . I want to caution the member that when he asks me about my definition of capitation or rostering, if the member is implying that I have some system in mind at the moment, the member is mistaken. And I've explained that to the member.

But as I think the member knows, capitation is a system whereby each physician is paid on the basis of the number of patients that the physician takes care of. So that you're paid so much per patient as opposed to so much per service provided to the patient.

Rostering is a system, I believe, whereby each physician has a roster of patients with respect to which that physician is responsible.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Deputy Chairman, normally, this being Tuesday, we have private members' day. And I believe it's most appropriate that private members' discussions should take place today. The government moved a motion which moved us to government business. And I disagree that we should be doing that today.

Therefore I would move that this committee rise and report progress.

The division bells rang from 2:38 p.m. until 2:48 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 29

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Lautermilch
Kowalsky	Renaud	Calvert
Pringle	Koenker	Bradley
Lorje	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Serby	Hamilton
Murray	Langford	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag
Flavel	Aldridge	McPherson
Bjornerud	Gantefoer	

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, there have been a number of concerns we've raised with the minister, and we certainly appreciate the forthrightness the minister has given us in providing his responses and his answers; however we feel there are some other important issues that need to be raised and therefore at this time I do move, Mr. Deputy Chair, that the Chair do now leave the Chair.

The division bells rang from 2:50 p.m. until 2:52 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 28

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Lautermilch
Kowalsky	Renaud	Calvert
Pringle	Koenker	Bradley
Lorje	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Flavel
McLane	McPherson	Bjornerud
Gantefoer		

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 inclusive agreed to.

The Chair: — The Chair has erred. I apologize to committee members, particularly the third party, who were making their wishes known to me. I should have called a vote on each clause. I'm going to go back to clause 1 and apologize to committee members for my error.

The division bells rang from 2:55 p.m. until 2:59 p.m.

Clause 1 agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 27

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Renaud	Calvert	Pringle
Koenker	Bradley	Lorje
Scott	Nilson	Cline
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Flavel	McLane
McPherson	Krawetz	Gantefoer

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Clause 2

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe that we should rise and report progress.

The division bells rang from 3:01 p.m. until 3:02 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Renaud	Pringle	Koenker
Lorje	Scott	Nilson
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	McLane	McPherson
Krawetz	Gantefoer	

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, as we look at the second clause, we understand that the government still haven't caught the message. And while there's a message we're trying to relay here, it seems like the minister responsible is certainly not interested in really paying attention. I think it's certainly imperative that we take the time for this message to be released, and in regards to this clause that the government give some thought to the clause and the necessity for clause 2.

And therefore at this time I move the chairman do now leave the Chair.

The division bells rang from 3:05 p.m. until 3:06 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Renaud	Pringle	Koenker
Lorje	Scott	Nilson
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	McLane	McPherson
Krawetz	Gantefoer	

The division bells rang from 3:07 p.m. until 3:14 p.m.

Clause 2 agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Koenker	Lorje	Scott
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Thompson	McLane
McPherson	Krawetz	Gantefoer

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Clause 3

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned earlier, I believe that we should be dealing with private members' Bills and motions today . . . business, rather than government business. Therefore I would move that this committee rise and report progress.

The division bells rang from 3:16 p.m. until 3:17 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Koenker	Lorje	Scott
Nilson	Cline	Serby
Hamilton	Murray	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag

Thomson	McLane	McPherson
Krawetz	Gantefoer	

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, at this time I don't think it would be appropriate for us to move into the repealing of section 47 as item 3 would suggest.

And therefore at this time I would move that the Deputy Chair do leave the Chair.

The division bells rang from 3:18 p.m. until 3:19 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Pringle	Koenker	Lorje
Scott	Nilson	Cline
Serby	Hamilton	Murray
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Sonntag	Thomson	McLane
McPherson	Krawetz	

The division bells rang from 3:20 p.m. until 3:21 p.m.

Clause 3 agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thompson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Clause 4

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, we haven't had the opportunity yet to do a lot of the things that need to be done on this particular Bill. Therefore I would move that this committee rise and report progress.

The division bells rang from 3:22 p.m. until 3:23 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I look at clause 4 and I certainly would indicate again that the Minister of Health was certainly straightforward in his responses in addressing concerns we had about clause 4. And while we understand what clause 4 is saying, Mr. Deputy Chair, we just feel at this time that clause 4 should not be moved forward. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Chair, I would move that the Deputy Chair do leave the Chair.

The Chair: — Order, order. Committee members, it is of course all right to call votes, and that's fine. The Clerks are having an increasing trouble taking the vote and I ask all hon. members to allow the vote to be taken without disruption.

The division bells rang from 3:25 p.m. until 3:26 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz

The division bells rang from 3:27 p.m. to 3:28 p.m.

Clause 4 agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski

Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Clause 5

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I believe at this time it would be most appropriate if the committee was to rise and report progress. I would so move.

The division bells rang from 3:29 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 24

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Certainly while we would acknowledge that sooner or later this clause will be passed and this Bill will come into force, it's not appropriate that it be moved ahead at this time. And in no disrespect to the Chair, I would move that the Deputy Chair do leave the Chair.

The division bells rang from 3:31 p.m. until 3:32 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 25

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz
Gantfoer		

The division bells rang from 3:33 p.m. until 3:34 p.m.

Clause 5 agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 25

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Koenker
Bradley	Scott	Nilson
Cline	Hamilton	Murray
Langford	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Thomson
McLane	McPherson	Krawetz
Gantefoer		

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Elderhostel started in New Hampshire in the late 1970s largely through the efforts of one Marty Knowlton. In Canada, Dr. Robert Williston of the University of New Brunswick founded a Canadian version of the Elderhostel, also in the late 1970s.

The University of Regina seniors' education centre first hosted an Elderhostel in 1990. To date in Canada, there are approximately 150 Elderhostel programs at various post-secondary educational institutions across Canada. Around the world there are about 300,000 Elderhostellers in 60 nations.

This afternoon it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the Assembly, 11 Elderhostellers that are visiting the University of Regina's seniors' education centre. They're seated in the Speaker's gallery and they are accompanied by coordinators of the program, Marj and George Will of Regina. If they would rise when I introduce them, please.

So we'll start with Marj and George, if they could stand. Mrs. Marion Adams of Trenton, Ontario. Mrs. Lillian Lee of Toronto, Ontario. Virginia Morton of Bettendorf, Iowa. And Mrs. Edna Nordin of St. John's, Newfoundland. Mrs. Jacqueline Paterson of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. Mrs. Marian Rae of Medicine Hat, Alberta. Mrs. Muriel Rogers of Medicine Hat, Alberta. Joan Russ of Scarborough, Ontario. And Alison Watson of Regina, Saskatchewan. Not able to make it was Theresa Klemm of West Chester, Pennsylvania.

I'd ask all members to give a warm welcome to the

Elderhostellers who are visiting us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — With leave, Mr. Deputy Chair, to also introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I would also like to welcome the people from the Elderhostellers here to the Assembly. In particular, I'd like to welcome Marj and George Will from Regina here. Hopefully they've had opportunities before to come into the legislature, but if they haven't, I would certainly ask them to come back again and observe the proceedings.

I would also like to welcome to the Assembly, Marion, Lillian, Virginia, Edna — particularly Edna, being from the U.S. (United States), I believe. Our Assembly works considerably different than what your legislatures do there. We have a unicameral system rather than a bicameral system. I'd also like to welcome Jacqueline, Marion, Muriel, Joan, and Alison.

I hope you enjoy the proceedings today. You will get lots of opportunity to observe how the members vote in this Assembly and some of the other procedures that lead up to that point. You will get an opportunity to hear what the bells do, which call members in to vote, Mr. Chairman — Mr. Deputy Chairman. And I would certainly like to welcome you to stay as long as you would like to do so. And thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 77
(continued)**

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I move, Mr. Deputy Chair, that we report Bill No. 77 without amendment.

The division bells rang from 3:40 p.m. until 3:41 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 26

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Renaud	Calvert	Pringle
Koenker	Bradley	Scott
Nilson	Cline	Hamilton
Murray	Langford	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag
Flavel	Thomson	McPherson
Krawetz	Gantefoer	

Nays — 5

Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1545)

THIRD READINGS**Bill No. 77 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act**

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

The division bells rang from 3:46 p.m. until 3.49 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 22

Van Mulligen	Mitchell	Shillington
Johnson	Whitmore	Kowalsky
Pringle	Koenker	Trew
Bradley	Nilson	Cline
Hamilton	Murray	Langford
Wall	Kasperski	Sonntag
Flavel	Thomson	Krawetz
Gantefoer		

Nays — 4

D'Autremont	Toth	Heppner
Goohsen		

The Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce any officials that he may wish to.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, again today we're assisted by Con Hnatiuk, who is deputy minister of Social Services; Neil Yeates, associate deputy minister; Bob Wihlidal, director of the budget management branch; Phil Walsh, executive director, income security division; and Richard Hazel, executive director of family and youth services.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, there are a number of questions for the committee to review before we vote off the debate on the estimates with regards to spending in Social Services.

And one of the questions that was being . . . we raised when the House recessed last evening was about youth centres and youth treatment centres. And there's a centre, I believe, at North Battleford that's been facing some problems over the past little while, Mr. Minister, and I'm kind of wondering where we sit today.

What has your department done to address the concerns and the questions that have been coming forward? What recommendations has your department brought forward? And what have you done to implement a change that would certainly address those concerns and make sure the people of North Battleford are quite comfortable with the young offender centre in the city of North Battleford?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, as you may recall, I had I think a relatively long conversation with the member from Humboldt around this subject. There has been the Jackson report done on the North Battleford centre. Each and every one of the recommendations now of the Jackson report have been responded to and steps have been taken. And I'd be very pleased to provide for the member a printed statement of all the responses to each of the recommendations.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd be pleased if you'd just take a moment to let us know about some of those recommendations in the Assembly today.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Again, Mr. Chair, we did have quite a lengthy discussion about that in the House the other night — some of the concerns that I think have affected the North Battleford Youth Centre regarding staff turnover. There's been a high level of staff turnover in that centre. That does not continue to be a problem. At the current time, there are only two vacant positions. At one time in 1993, back in '93, we had vacancies as high as 17 in that centre. And so that problem is being addressed — has been addressed.

There was some question about the use of holding cells within the centre. Now holding cells are used when required, but to separate youth demonstrating behaviour which puts themselves and other residents at risk.

We are working at bringing in more native staffing for the facility. There was a fair number of questions about staff relationships and staff meetings and communications within the centre and we've taken some real steps to try and address those issues.

So again, I can provide for the member a much more detailed comment on the situation at North Battleford. We feel we've come a long way.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you mention about the staffing and some of the problems that have occurred with staffing within the North Battleford centre. Mr. Minister, can you inform me as to how many staff members we have in the centre today, what there were for numbers of staff members for the past year, '95 and '94, as well as the number of youth that have been treated or been involved in the centre over the past three years.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we would have to do the research to get the numbers of youth actually held at the facility over the course of the three years. Sometimes the facility will be full; perhaps at other times, not full.

But to get the actual number . . . I can tell the member that it is a 52-bed secure custody facility — 52-bed; and there are 50 permanent staff in the centre. Of that 50 today, 11 are aboriginal and three are from other minorities. There are, in addition, 65 non-permanent staff.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, if I caught you correctly, you said 50 permanent and 65 non-permanent. Do I understand you correctly on that, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Minister, when we talk about the centre and individuals that are looked after or indeed housed in the centre, and I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, would many or the majority of these individuals come from first nations background or is it quite a diversity of individuals? And, Mr. Minister, what are some of the reasons why we would end up with the numbers as they are.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — In fact, Mr. Speaker, this facility tends to serve the northern area of our province, and I think understandably therefore the majority, I think, of the youth incarcerated here would be aboriginal, given that the majority of the population in the North is aboriginal.

So yes, it would be true that the majority of young people in this facility would be from the North and would be aboriginal.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege this morning of talking to a couple of women who are basically doing some research for a university professor, and they're of first nations descent. And they had a number of questions and a number of different issues, some dealing with education, some dealing with health, some dealing with justice.

And I'm wondering . . . Mr. Minister, I'm going to come at it from the judicial side of it and just say, one of the things that has been done over the past number of years in addressing concerns about problems that native people run into, and one of the proposals they have put forward, is the idea of sentencing circles and addressing with their first nations individuals in that matter.

Is this something that could be part of . . . or something along that line, that a first nations community could bring forward, that might be . . . enhance the role of Social Services in dealing with young offenders and certainly the program of youth centres across the province?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair — and here I speak perhaps more generally for government than simply for Social Services — the area that the member touches in would be in the realm, I think, more of Justice and the court system and sentencing and so on. But we are supportive of alternate mechanisms, including sentencing circles.

We are working with communities, with police forces, with others in our province these days, around a concept described as restorative justice, which would look at other processes for dealing particularly with non-violent crime, particularly with young offenders involved in non-violent crime.

It is a matter for Justice. In Social Services we are responsible to provide the rehabilitation, the housing, the custody, for young offenders. But as government, we are supportive of alternates, including sentencing circles and restorative justice techniques.

Mr. Toth: — So what you're basically saying, Mr. Minister, is while the Department of Justice administers, if you will, the law, the fact of looking after . . . And I take it we're dealing with young offenders, individuals — I believe you said under the age of 16 in most cases — that you'd be dealing with as far as looking after them.

And I think you talked about the idea of helping with some counselling, to help with rehabilitation, so that when they would leave a centre, they would leave with a different view as to how they look at society and how they're going to become very positive members and contributors to society.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could share with us this afternoon some of the programing that would be provided, the type of programing that is provided, to try and meet the needs of young people. And if you will, Mr. Minister, I think what I've found and what I've seen in first nations community on many, many occasions, Mr. Minister, is that while . . . And certainly of all young people, is the fact that young people sometimes can be very inattentive.

And maybe some of the problems that are arising are arising because of the fact that they may not have received the care or the concern or felt the love in the home and they've ended up in situations with, if you will, the wrong crowd, ended up with a group of peers that have led them in the wrong direction.

And so what I'm saying, Mr. Minister, is, there are so many circumstances that individuals have probably had to deal with that have caused them to take certain . . . go a certain route and make certain choices which have put them in, placed them in, conflict with the law.

And in view of that, Mr. Minister, I'm interested in knowing what your department is doing to address some of the emotional stress and concern that these youth face when certainly they are sent to these centres, in some cases, to pay for crimes committed as well as to receive counselling and rehabilitation.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Just to respond generally to the member's observations, I think we would share much of the same observation here. I think in terms of young people, sometimes an ounce of prevention is worth a tonne of care. And so through the Department of Social Services, we work very closely with, for instance, the family service bureaux of Saskatchewan that provide significant resources to families, individuals, young people, in terms of counselling and so on.

In terms of the appropriate response to a young person who's been involved in a criminal activity, whether that's been the result of hanging around with the wrong crowd or however that has happened, we are looking and searching for mechanisms, both to get tough on the crime, but to also restore some justice and to restore the life that headed down the wrong track.

And so there's a whole number of issues and options now that . . . We're working with police forces. I'm looking forward to joining with a number of police officers later this week to talk about some of these very issues. We think that there can be better ways to do what we're doing to strengthen our young people, to make them accountable for their actions, but equally, not to set them into a life of crime.

Mr. Toth: — Well certainly, Mr. Minister, we need to take the time to look at other options and alternatives and giving young people a reason to reassess where they may be going with their lives and how they approach the daily living cycle. I think, Mr. Minister, that some of your government's policies certainly haven't helped the situation.

This whole policy of gambling was another issue that came up today and it was interesting to just get a general feeling of where these two individuals that I was talking to were coming from. They certainly were not in favour of your gambling policy.

One of the problems that we find in our society at the present time, Mr. Minister, is occasions where young people are left on their own because the parents have found that because of the convenience it's a lot easier now to complete work and maybe grab a quick bite and run off either to the hotel and run that VLT (video lottery terminal) machine and spend all night at it and just give up all their funds, or lose all their money, or run to the casino.

And as a result, young people are left without any real direction in their lives. And they end up in the situations where they're out with their peers and they start getting into trouble because it appears that well, if mom and dad can do it, if they don't really care, then why should I care. It doesn't really matter. No one else cares so I'm going to do my own thing. They're just looking for some support; they're looking for some encouragement; they're looking for some love and care at home.

And I think, Mr. Minister, when you're sitting down with the police forces across the province this week, I trust you'll take a look and maybe even take the time to give second thought to some of the policies and how they have hurt family relationships, relationships and concerns, which can lead to some of the problems that our youth are facing today.

So I trust, Mr. Minister, you will indeed be more than open and more than willing to sit down and listen to some of the concerns that our police officers are facing as they deal with individuals on the street on a daily basis.

And talking about dealing with individuals on the street, I just noticed in the paper today that officers responded to a call

yesterday where a young person had a gun in his belt buckle, and it wasn't till they had finally confiscated the weapon that they realized it was nothing more than an air pistol.

However, even air pistols can look very real and you don't know exactly what they are until you find them. And certainly people in the neighbourhood were quite concerned. But one would wonder why a young person would be walking around wearing this air pistol in his belt buckle.

So therefore, Mr. Minister, I know there is a number of these issues that need to be raised, and I would certainly recommend that you take the time to not only listen but go with some ideas. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what your department has done and some of the ideas you are putting forward to address some of the concerns that the officials run into and see on a daily basis.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the member has quite a broad, wide-ranging statement there. If I could maybe perhaps refocus on some of the very specific things we are doing.

As I said before and particularly in terms of young people, very often the ounce of prevention is sure worth a pound of cure, if not a tonne of cure. So we are endeavouring to, in addition to continuing to provide the custody facilities and so on, to be working full stop on issues around prevention and rehabilitation.

We also know that we cannot separate young people from the context of their family or those around them and the communities in which they live. Someone, I think, a lot wiser than I once said that it takes a village to raise a child; that none of us are raised in isolation or grow up in isolation. We grow up with neighbours, with friends, with family, and in some ways it does take a village to raise a child.

And perhaps one of the tragedies of our modern circumstance is that we live so separate and apart from each other in our own little boxes with our own little VCRs (video cassette recorder), and sometimes we just don't have that same community and village contact that we might have had in other times.

And so we need to be working in prevention. We need to be working in rehabilitation. We also need to be conscious of the requirement that we involve families, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and the community — the village, the neighbourhood — the community in which we live.

We have — in terms of dealing with some of these very specific issues and in terms of giving options to custody, options to the traditional jail approach — we have now seven family preservation programs which provide 24-hour services seven days a week to youth and families as an alternative to custody. We are working with a variety of community groups, individuals, Indian and Metis governments to provide day programs, academic and life skill programs, school re-entry programs, recreational cultural activities.

We have now programs somewhat in infancy but growing — and I would like to see them grow more — that link the young

person, again a young person that's involved in non-violent property crime, to link those young people with their victims; to bring the young person who has committed the act face to face with the victim.

Now this won't occur in every circumstance and it's not perhaps appropriate in every circumstance, but in some circumstances a young person will tell you it's much more difficult to face my victim face to face and have to own up to that consequence than it is to face a judge and a courtroom where lawyers are representing everybody.

And so we have circumstances now where we describe them as alternate measures program where victims and offenders voluntarily meet face to face, and the outcomes may include some personal service offered to the victim. It may mean compensation paid in money or it may mean appropriate community service. It may mean an apology. It may mean that the young person submits then to counselling. It may mean that the young person will submit to alcohol or drug rehabilitation. Or it may mean that they will be responsible for undertaking some other kind of community service.

There's a project here in Regina and Saskatoon which is now providing an alternate measure to deal with young people who are caught shoplifting. Rather than entering the formal court process and all that goes with that, in fact, they are brought to account to the store owner or the business where they have been guilty of shoplifting. So they're accountable then to the corporate victim as opposed to an individual victim.

So there are . . . and there are many others — ideas, programs, plans — that we are working on because we think we can accomplish more for our young people, bring down the numbers of young people involved in crime, and in that sense, get very tough on the criminal act by making individuals responsible to the broader society but also to the victims who they've hurt.

I'm going to indicate, Mr. Chair, to the member that my responsibilities now will be taken over by the House Leader, ably taken over by the House Leader, and that I'm required to attend to another function at 4:30. If we continue with estimates beyond the supper break, I will certainly be returning and gladly speaking to the members and answering the questions.

So in my absence the House Leader who seems . . . When the House Leader returns he will fill in.

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

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well with leave, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you. To you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to introduce to you 45 grade 6 students

sitting in the west gallery.

They are from Wagner School in Nipawin, one of the most beautiful towns in Saskatchewan. They are accompanied today by teachers Michael Botterill, Paul Thomas, and Debbie Chorney; and chaperons Mrs. Jurgens, Mrs. Unger, Mr. Armstrong, and Mrs. LeCuyer.

Now Nipawin, Mr. Chairman, is set in the pines in north-eastern Saskatchewan. It's set on the banks of the Saskatchewan River. It's sitting between Codette Lake and Tobin Lake. It's noted for its tourists. It gets many, many tourists during the year. They have excellent fishing. They have a wonderful golf course. They have skiing not far away.

And I know that they will enjoy the Committee of Finance — that's what's happening right now. I know the Minister of Social Services, who just left, was in Nipawin last week to talk to students there. So please join with me in welcoming our guests from Nipawin.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

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

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would like to join with the minister in welcoming our guests from Nipawin. I see that this is a large and relatively young group, and I'd like to mention to them that my brother was a doctor in Nipawin a number of years ago and could very well have delivered a number of these children, and I hope that they would remember him fondly in that sense.

Nipawin is indeed a very, very lovely part of Saskatchewan — I have visited it very often. I hope that they enjoy their trip down to Regina, that they find the Assembly an interesting place. And I would like to ask everyone to again welcome them to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

The Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Rosthern.

Mr. Heppner: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'd also like to welcome this group of students to the legislature today. Statements made earlier on that the Minister of Social Services had been in your community recently, and it's interesting that the teacher that invited him there to that particular class is a very good friend of mine. In fact he asked me if I thought if it was a good move to invite the Minister of Social Services, and I highly

recommended him. And so he went down there and enjoyed it.

I've done some fishing and some hunting in your area and I have to agree with the other people that welcomed you that you live in a very beautiful part of the province. And we're also very proud of this particular building and what it stands for. I hope you enjoy your time in Regina and in the legislature and remember fondly your visit here.

Welcome to Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Social Services Vote 36

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, it's unfortunate that the Minister of Social Services had other commitments at this time. I'm not exactly sure that the Government House Leader is going to be as cordial as the Minister of Social Services was, but we'll certainly attempt a try.

Mr. Minister, your colleague and I were addressing how we address programs that kind of deal with young people and help them become affiliated and put them back in society and help them become productive members of society. And your colleague had just finished giving some of the ideas and presenting them, that have been brought forward by the department.

But an area that I wanted to get into was a discussion on the . . . some debate or discussion around the discussion paper that the Department of Social Services is bringing forward. I believe the member from Humboldt raised some questions about that the other day.

But I would just like to know: to date, Mr. Minister, what consultations have taken place in regards to that paper; the groups that have been talked to; whether or not you've had any public consultations about this process; and indeed the response to this paper?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The department . . . the minister and the officials have met with over 250 different individuals and groups. I'm assured by the officials that the approach has met with overwhelming support from those who have contacted the department.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, in these meetings, have these meetings been public meetings so far or have they been basically meetings based on invitations that have been sent out to groups that the department are aware of would have more of an interest and more of a willingness to sit down and discuss the paper as well as bring forward some suggestions?

And if they have been, just more on the basis of invitations, is

the department planning any broad, public consultative meetings for some input?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Many of them have been public meetings. And there have of course been a number of private meetings, but many of them have been public meetings. There has, in our view, been adequate opportunity for the public to have input into this.

Mr. Toth: — Well certainly, Mr. Minister, as I observed in looking over the report, there were a number of recommendations in that report that I can certainly concur with and pass those on.

In fact, Mr. Minister, when the Minister of Social Services was in Yorkton at a consultation meeting regarding the budget, he had asked the public at that time how they felt and if they had seen this report on changes to Social Services. And as I was talking to individuals in the audience that night, I asked them as well for their input and what their views were.

And I certainly contend with you, Mr. Minister, and your department, that as people began to review the report and as they took more of an in-depth review and as they heard a little more about it, there certainly was a broad consensus that there were some good, positive thoughts being brought forward. And I guess if there was a concern, it was about the fact of whether or not any of this report would come to fruition.

And so, Mr. Deputy Chair, and to the minister: what is the department doing today as far as the report? Are they still in a mode of consulting with people? Or are they in the process now of taking information they've gleaned from their meetings, with public meetings and individuals, to come forward with a recommendation to government as to how they would like to implement it, and certainly pointing out the areas that they feel that could be addressed today and other areas that they need more discussion on? Where are we today on that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The answer to your question really is both. The throne speech announced that this would be implemented in 1997. Something earlier than that may be possible with some cooperation by the federal government.

And we note there have been encouraging comments from the federal government, the latest of which was today. And I received a text, in fact, of the Prime Minister's speech in which he led us to be encouraged that the issue of child poverty would be attacked, and attacked directly.

So our target was 1997. However we . . . There's some hope that perhaps there may be some significant movement across the country before that.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, you mentioned the fact that you're hoping to have something done about this report or implement it in 1997. My concern is, as we've been discussing and debating over the last six months, that one would wonder whether, in view of the promises that have been made with regards to the CCTA agreement and the review process and presenting it, a report to the stakeholders as well as this

Assembly . . . And the fact that you've basically said well it was going to be ready last fall; then it was going to be ready this spring; then one of the ministers said, well we'll have it to you by May 1. And then when May 1 came, well we hope to have a report revealed by the middle of June.

And we're still waiting, Mr. Minister, and I guess . . . and based on the concerns that members across the floor have, that's the concern we have with regards to this report. Is it going to be: well today we hope to implement it in 1997. But as we get into 1997 and 1997 rolls along, all of a sudden the recommendations of the report aren't coming forward. Is this just going to be put off?

Mr. Minister, it would seem to me that it would be appropriate to at least have a target time rather than saying "hope" . . . We're planning on, and we plan on and would like to see it up and operating, if you will, by April 1.

Now I realize that you may need some help from the federal government on this issue. But the realities are, I think the people of this province are losing, if you will, hope; and believing that, just hoping to have something done, means anything any more. They want to see something specific. So if when you say that the CCTA agreement, a review of this matter, is going to be on a certain date, that it's going to be there rather than being put off.

So, Mr. Minister, can you give — I realize that you're not the minister responsible for the department — but maybe as House Leader can you give . . . indicate that as House Leader you certainly will inform the minister responsible that it would be appropriate that we get on with this matter. And if it depends on the federal government, maybe we forget about the federal government and we implement it and show the people of Canada what this province can do to address these concerns.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, I think the opposite is true. Rather than having been later than target, I think the hope is that we'll actually be earlier than the target. Target date was set to be 1997 for such broad, sweeping reforms. We think that's reasonable. However, it looks as if something may be possible before that and that's actually what we're aiming at.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd like to welcome the minister and the officials here today. I'd like to ask the House Leader, since he is replacing the Minister of Social Services this afternoon in these estimates, if he could please explain for me the role that Social Services might play in child support, in maintenance.

A number of your clientele have approached me over time at various periods because they have a great deal of difficulty collecting their maintenance payments. I had another one this morning, Mr. Minister, that phoned me. And it seems to be an ongoing, reoccurring problem and many times within the same families.

A lot of times these are your clients. If the maintenance payments were made properly and on time, if the maintenance payments were of the proper level, perhaps these people would

not need to be on social services, would not need to be clients, and therefore would not need to be on the roll of using taxpayers' dollars. Most of these people would prefer not to be in that position, but unfortunately because maintenance is not forthcoming in the proper time, they have to go to Social Services for assistance.

The lady that phoned me this morning, her spouse is approximately three years behind in his maintenance payments; he's moved to British Columbia. There seems to be a great deal of difficulty moving back and forth with the jurisdictions to enforce maintenance orders, to get the people into court, to move through the process.

I have talked to the Minister of Justice about this. I had assurances that British Columbia was looking into the situation. When the lady phoned British Columbia to find out what was happening, they knew nothing. They didn't have a clue what was supposed to be going on. Supposedly British Columbia was supposed to take this person who was supposed to pay the maintenance, to court. That hadn't happened to the best of the knowledge of the maintenance board person that was talked to in British Columbia.

So I think it's important, Mr. Minister, that Saskatchewan Social Services, in those areas where it is involved — people who are dependent on Social Services for assistance — that the Social Services department should play a leading role in encouraging the Minister of Justice and his department and the maintenance board to pursue these errant fathers, in most cases — perhaps in some cases, errant mothers — who do not meet their maintenance payments.

And I think it's incumbent on the Social Services department when they're involved in paying out maintenance — excuse me, not maintenance — support in these cases, where maintenance is being reneged on, where children are not receiving what they should do, what their dues are from their fathers — in most cases, sometimes perhaps their mothers — I think it's very incumbent on your department or actually the Minister of Social Services's department to deal with this.

And in fact since you are the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs serving this afternoon in place of the Minister of Social Services, perhaps you should be talking with your counterparts in British Columbia and across the province to find a solution to this problem, so that maintenance orders issued in a province such as Saskatchewan are enforceable in British Columbia or in Newfoundland or wherever across this great dominion the people move to.

I think it causes a great deal of harm to the children who fail to receive their maintenance support because they, Mr. Minister, are the ones who are losing out. As this mother said today to me, how is my child supposed to carry on in Air Cadets when the father refuses to pay any support whatsoever, and she has a very limited income.

It's not the parents that lose out, Mr. Minister, it's the children that are losing out. They are being denied the access to the same opportunities that other children are being denied.

So Mr. Minister, what is your department doing? What role do you play in those cases where Social Services is involved with parents who are supposed to be receiving maintenance support and where that maintenance support is not forthcoming?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Let me pay the former administration a rare compliment — at least it's rare coming from me — one of the few areas where I thought the former government was very effective was in this area. Prior to 1986 it was incumbent upon a recipient of . . . it was incumbent upon someone who is a recipient of maintenance to enforce it themselves. That posed peculiar hardship for those on social services, because they would often get an order their social assistance be reduced. Then they had to collect it, couldn't do it, missed out, and all in all it was a horrifying circus.

One of the changes which the now . . . Mr. Justice Lane, the current . . . the former attorney general, made was that they introduced the system of having the Attorney General's department, the Minister of Justice, the Department of Justice, collect the maintenance.

It really was very effective. The default rate prior to that was a shocking 85 per cent — 85 per cent of maintenance orders were in default. That's now been reduced to 25 per cent. It really is quite a change.

(1630)

The member also pointed to one of the difficulties which we have, and that is interjurisdictional orders. They are a problem, partially because other jurisdictions don't have a system as effective as we do, partially because of the difficulties of having these orders registered and re-registered.

I'm now going to refer to a particular hero of yours, the federal Minister of Justice.

An Hon. Member: — You hit him where it hurts.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, if these comments reduce you to an unintelligible state, the member from Moosomin will have to take over.

But the Minister of Justice has been most helpful on this area. In a program they have, they have been pursuing improvements which they would facilitate in interjurisdictional collections.

So the member has referred to one difficulty in interjurisdictional collections. We're pursuing that the only way we can, with the assistance of the federal government. And to the extent that the member from Cannington has any influence with the current Minister of Justice, you may want to encourage them to proceed as quickly as they can with their program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I think my influence on the federal Justice minister, Allan Rock, is about as great as my influence on you. At least though, I have a chance to talk directly with you, and the Minister of Justice is nowhere to be found any time you want to talk to him.

Mr. Minister, I believe there are though some reciprocal agreements in place that deal with maintenance transfers across provincial boundaries. How does Social Services deal with those as it pertains to the Social Service clients who should be receiving maintenance payments and who are receiving maintenance payments?

But what avenues, what actions, do you take when one of your clients is not receiving her maintenance payments or his maintenance payments? Does Social Services say we will contact the jurisdiction involved to seek that maintenance support? And is your reaction any different when the maintenance support is failing within the province as opposed to from outside of the province?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'll spare you a long speech here. This is a long tale of woe, at least for me personally. Back in the days of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), back in the '50s, the CCF used to pay maintenance to . . . used to pay social assistance to recipients; they collected the maintenance.

Then during the Liberal years of the government of Ross Thatcher, that system was abandoned. It was up to the social welfare recipients to collect it. It was a horrifying system.

And it was not until relatively recently that we resumed the system of social assistance recipients getting their social assistance. The Department of Justice collects it, as they try to collect everything else. When the money from those people is collected, it's returned to the treasury. But the social service recipients do not lose their social assistance by reason of failure of the spouses to pay maintenance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The social service recipients you say don't lose their social assistance when their maintenance comes in. But surely their maintenance, if they're getting — I'll just pull a number out of the air because I don't know what a social service assistance would be — but let's say it's \$1,000 a month, if they receive a support payment of \$400 for two children, would they still only end up with at the end of the month, \$1,000 or would they end up with some portion above that \$1,000 which is the maintenance for the children involved?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is what I tried to explain and perhaps didn't do so very well. As I said, during the '50s and early '60s, the social service recipients got their social assistance. Maintenance was assigned to the provincial treasury and it went to provincial treasury. They didn't get it and they didn't lose it.

It took us about 30 years, it took us almost 30 years, to return to that system but we're back to that system again. Social service recipients get their social assistance. Their maintenance is assigned to the provincial treasury and it is provincial treasury which gets the backlog when we get it. It is a much more humane and a much more effective system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So under this system, someone who's on social assistance really isn't concerned about whether maintenance is paid or not then. Because they receive their

social assistance regardless, from the department. It's then the department's duty to try and collect that maintenance from whoever the court order has been applied against. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, that's the case, but that's the case with everybody. Everybody, whether they're on social assistance or not, now files their return with the ministry of Justice, and the ministry of Justice collects it. So social service recipients aren't treated any different than anyone else.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, it would seem to me that they are. If someone is self-employed, let's say, and collecting maintenance, it would go through the maintenance board. But if that maintenance isn't paid to the maintenance board, the maintenance board then would not turn around and pass that maintenance on to the person who was entitled to it.

In the case of Social Services though, Social Services pays the person their social service allowance and then turns around and tries to collect the maintenance. If the maintenance is not collected, the person on social services loses nothing. The department suffers the loss.

In the case of the independent person who would be getting maintenance from the maintenance board through the Minister of Justice, if that maintenance isn't paid, they simply don't get their money. So in actual fact a person on social services, in this sense is better off under that system than the independent person is who is relying on the maintenance board to collect the money and pass it on to them. Because under that system, no money collected means no money returned.

And that is exactly what's happening in a number of cases. The money simply isn't paid to them. The maintenance board, perhaps within the province, will take the individual to court to collect the money, and then some of it is remitted on to the person who is entitled to it.

But under the social service system, the person entitled to the maintenance receives the maintenance whether or not your department has collected it. So I think that they are better off than the person under the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That may be. In that narrow sense, that may be accurate.

The view of the Department of Social Services, and I think the view of most humane people, is that people on social assistance are getting the minimum needed to care for themselves and their children. To lose a substantial portion of that in any maintenance payment is a very substantial portion of the social assistance. To lose a substantial portion of that creates very severe problems.

With respect to the efficiency and the effectiveness of a collection of maintenance for non-social service recipients, these questions really should be addressed to the Minister of Justice when his estimates are up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, what happens in the case

where your department is trying to collect maintenance from a spouse residing outside of this province? Do you pursue that as a department? Do you pursue that through the Minister of Justice? Do you have some other, reciprocal agreements with other Social Services departments across the country? What mechanisms do you use to try and pursue that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Minister of Justice pursues that. I could describe the procedure for it if you like, but I'd just be describing the legal procedures. The Department of Justice pursues those collections. This department is really only responsible for providing care for social services recipients.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What kind of a record does the Justice department then have on collecting the maintenance due to the Social Services department? Do they collect 10 per cent? 100 per cent? What kind of numbers are we looking at percentage-wise, and what kind of total dollars are we looking at?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm told that they don't have those figures with them. I'll undertake on behalf of the minister to provide those figures to you. I'm told they don't have those stats physically with them.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think they would be very important information, Mr. Minister, because it would be interesting to compare those numbers — the collections for a government department — and compare that to the collections of maintenance for those people who are not being represented by a government department.

And I think that would be extremely important and extremely telling on how the system is working, whether or not the social service system . . . Because the recipients of the money, the children, are not at a loss if the maintenance is not paid, whereas if they're not under the social service system, if the maintenance is not paid, those children suffer directly because of that.

Now I'm not saying that children under social assistance aren't also being denied access to some of the things that children in general have access to, but certainly under the system of the maintenance, they are receiving their full entitlement and their full benefit from the maintenance whereas a child outside of the system does not if they do not receive their maintenance payment.

So I think it would be extremely important that we receive those numbers as quickly as possible, Mr. Minister, and I'd like your assurance that those numbers will be so provided.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We'll provide them as quickly as is reasonably possible.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, I notice that there's a substantial sum of money that goes into services protecting children from abuse and neglect and gives support to families and communities. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you just could inform us of the particular services that are presently available in the department to meet the

specific cases that do come forward and how you deal with them.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — These services are in general adoption, foster care, child protection, and residential services.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, does Social Services offer any kind of a program for individuals who may be in an abusive situation looking for some help or assistance, or does that come under Justice? Let's say a woman who may find herself in a situation where there's abuse and is under direct need of care and is looking for some assistance. Is that handled under your department, or is that outside of the department?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, assistance where it's appropriate would come directly or indirectly from this department. Sometimes it's through the shelters themselves. That's the general case. There might be occasions upon which they'd be eligible for social assistance, and that would be reviewed.

The legalities of it all, however, is handled by the Department of Justice.

Mr. Toth: — So if a woman were facing a situation with a young family where there was severe abuse, and in particular, some of the areas where abuse really becomes very, very severe and becomes a hardship is in an alcohol situation where a spouse may come home, and certainly maybe spent too much time either at the local establishment or whatever, but comes home and certainly he is not in total control of his faculties and creates a situation where it's difficult for a spouse or partner to continue to put up with the abuse that they're receiving. Would they make a call to your department?

I believe there's a 1-800 number available, and I'm wondering, is that run by your department as well? And how would your department then deal with this situation, especially when you get outside of our larger urban centres where a person may be in a rural setting or on a farm and may need some help. Is there someone who is there to provide some help or assistance for say, a mother and her young children, for a period of time until the abusive situation is dealt with?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There's a number of calls they could make, none of which would be to this department. By far and away, the most commonly — in the situation where there's some danger to life and limb — by far the most common is to call the police. They might also call one or two social agencies, Mobile Crisis, or they may call the transition houses themselves, none of which are to this department. There is no 1-800 number in this department. The department isn't directly involved in those sort of very front line kind of services.

Mr. Toth: — When it comes to child abuse or child neglect, Mr. Minister, what avenues does the department follow up in dealing with these? Let's say a person should happen to put forward a complaint or a view that there might be child abuse taking place, whether it's in a home or whether it's even say on a playground, what avenues does your department follow up in dealing with these situations?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There is a protocol for following up on that. When there is evidence brought to the attention of the department, whether that be in the form of complaints or otherwise — a teacher might call and say there's room to be concerned — the department does follow up on that. There's a protocol to be followed.

And they attempt to balance the interests of all parties. The parents have rights; the children have rights. In the end of the day, however, there has to be a certain tilting of the system towards protection of children, and that's done. But there's a delicate problem here of balancing the rights of parents against the protection of children. In the case where they conflict, the protection of children really comes first. And when you think about it, I think most fair-minded people would agree that's appropriate.

Mr. Toth: — I certainly agree with you, Mr. Minister, because I've had concerns raised on both sides of the scale. Situations where individuals may have felt that when an abusive situation as they saw it was reported, the feeling that it may not have been acted upon quickly enough or responded to. And yet on the other hand, where individuals who ended up being dealt with and having the department respond, feeling that the department may have overreacted.

So it's certainly imperative that in a situation where a person may suspect abuse, where a call is made to your department to look into it, that the rights of the child and the rights of the parents and all involved . . . Even in a school situation, I think it's very easy sometimes where you may find individuals and even students making accusations against teachers out of frustrations with the fact that they may feel that they haven't been treated fairly on an exam or whatever. That there is a broad policy out there that certainly there's a total review done and that everything is handled very discreetly. So that indeed at the end of the day legitimate complaints are addressed, and addressed appropriately, and that these concerns certainly are raised and at the same time that people are responsible and held accountable for their actions.

Mr. Minister, I raised some questions regarding adoption yesterday as well and a couple of other questions that have come up. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when it comes to adoptions, first of all what are the qualifications to be an adoptive parent that the department uses when they work through an adoption process?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are very few children available for adoption these days. The vast majority of children which are available for adoption have special needs. Thus the officials tell me that the overwhelming approach here is that you attempt to assess the needs of the children, then you try to match that with the skills of the parents.

And given the few number of children available for adoption it's a case of one on. It always has been I guess, but much more so now. It's a case of one on one, matching the needs of the children — and as I say, they're often special needs children —

with the particular skills and ability of the parents. And that's the approach.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, given the fact that there are so many parents . . . individuals who would like to be parents and would like to have a family, I would take it then from your comments that the demand for children or individuals wishing to adopt children is much higher than the number of children that are available. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's true. The number of children put up for adoption is a fraction of what it once was. Single-parent families are, if not the norm, they're certainly very common. A couple of decades ago it was a very considerable scandal — pregnancy out of wedlock. Now while it may not be the accepted . . . it's certainly not the norm, but the stigma to single parenthood is no longer there and most single parents keep their children. So the demand far, far exceeds supply.

In fact I'm told by the officials that most of the children which are available, the mother is often involved in picking the parents so that there is some continuity between the mother and the child even although their actual parenting duties may be done elsewhere.

Mr. Toth: — Well I can appreciate that, Mr. Minister. And certainly as I look at the adoption process and as I get couples even coming into my office seeking my assistance as to the process they may follow in adopting a child, I'm aware, Mr. Minister, of the fact that there have been groups, and I'm not sure whether the Department of Social Services has been involved or not, and I'd like you to clarify it, but there are countries around the world where there are a lot of children who do not have families. Children in homes where they really have no one to care for them.

And a number of people even in this city of Regina and this province of Saskatchewan have planned and have put in process a form of adopting not just interprovincially, but outside of the country. And I'm wondering what process, Mr. Minister, we have in place today and how many adoptions . . . or how many adoptions are in the process. And what kind of understandings we have with other countries of the world as far as allowing some of those children, young people, to come to this country and to be adopted by families who would certainly provide a loving family environment versus the institutional environment that they are basically in today, and in many cases just a number.

And I know there are, and I've heard of, and I've had individuals who have been to other countries who have mentioned some of the plight of these type of individuals. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what the department is doing to address the concerns and the questions that are coming from adoptive parents regarding going outside of the province to adopt children.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Canada certainly cooperates on this. It's really a national question. Canada cooperates on this. We're a signatory to The Hague Agreement, to The Hague

Convention, and Saskatchewan is included in that of course.

I want to say that the statistics here are quite startling. There have been 29 placements only, since January 1995. The truth of the matter is, almost all foreign countries discourage these adoptions. They do not want the youth of the nation being shipped out of the country, and almost all countries discourage this.

There are adopting arrangements with Romania, China, and Russia, among others. All three countries discourage it. An element of nationalism — perhaps unfortunate — an element of nationalism here that makes this very difficult. As I say, there have been 29 since January 1995.

I know that those who have, is a very long, difficult procedure as well and often involves enormous expense living in a foreign country for months on end to complete the adoption arrangements.

The difficulty is, while it sounds humanitarian and probably is humanitarian, foreign countries . . . almost all foreign nations discourage the adoption of the youth of the nation.

Mr. Toth: — Well certainly, Mr. Minister, I can appreciate that. And certainly we have seen on . . . via our TVs and certainly heard through the other news mediums of situations where families have worked through this process and it has taken a good long time for the families who have been able to put in motion the adoptive procedures, and have gone to countries like Romania to adopt children. And many cases, I think, Mr. Minister, many of these families certainly indicated it took a lot longer than they thought. There was a lot of emotion, a real emotional drain, as they were going through the process and the red tape.

And I guess if you will, Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister, the concern we have is the fact that while there are families who would love to provide a good, loving and caring home, there are children around the world who are living in situations, very deplorable situations. It's unfortunate that other nations of the world cannot look beyond their own borders.

And I can appreciate their views of nationalism. I can appreciate the fact that they want to keep their young people at home. But some of the situations that have been described to me, some of the situations that have been raised via the news media, would certainly indicate that anyone who would desire to adopt one of these children is certainly going to provide an avenue and an atmosphere that was much more conducive to the well-being of that individual.

And I guess all we can do, Mr. Minister, is work through national programs, work through international agencies, work with other countries in trying to reassure them that we're not . . . it's not the intention of the province of Saskatchewan or families within the province of Saskatchewan or certainly in Canada to just go and steal away the young people.

It's the desire to provide a loving and caring home in view of the fact that we do not have the numbers of children in this

country that are available for adoption, as well as taking children out of an environment that really is nothing more than an institution where they really don't have that care, in some cases.

And while I realize we can't do much about it, I think it's . . . what we need to do, even as a province, is to reiterate to these other nations that there are families who could provide very loving and caring homes and could assist you through a time of change in your nation, as you try to address those changes.

So I think, Mr. Minister, it's important that we just let other nations know, even if it's by the federal government, that there are some very loving homes here who would like to reach out to people. And I would encourage you and your department, whenever an opportunity arises, just to let even ambassadors from other countries know that there are these opportunities here if they are in a process of finding that they need some help in that matter. So I would encourage you to do that.

Would the fact that there have been major changes in how adoptions are handled and the fact that the birth mothers are now involved very intimately with the adoption procedures and birth mothers are aware of and even choose who the adoptive parents are . . . there isn't as much of a need any more, Mr. Minister, for a program or policy whereby adopted children need to look and do a lot of research to find out who their real parents were.

But I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, for those who still are . . . were adopted a number of years ago, before this process changed, what is in place today to assist a child or a parent in locating the birth parent or the child?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There has been some progress made in that regard. Effective June 1, 1995 the department allows searches for an adopted adult at the request of the birth parent. So this is facilitated now.

The time is 3 minutes to 12. We're going to be going to the Premier's estimates this evening. And I think unless there's something that you really want to ask, I'm going to report progress. And I see the member nodding his head, so I'll move we report progress.

The Chair: — It may seem to the Government House Leader that it's 3 minutes to 12, but I assure you it's really only about 2 or 3 minutes to 5.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I suggest, Mr. Chairperson, we call it 5, then the officials don't have to come back.

The committee recessed until 7 p.m.

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