

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on behalf of citizens from Kamsack and Veregin this afternoon.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

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

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan, mostly from the city of Melville. I'll read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take some responsibility for the ill effects of its gambling expansion policy, and to immediately commission an independent study to review the social impact that its gambling policy has had on our province and the people who live here.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take some responsibility for the ill effects of its gambling expansion policy, and immediately commission an independent study to review the social impact that its gambling policy has had on our province and the people who live here.

I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the construction of a hospital in La Roche that will provide adequate health care to northern residents.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saltcoats, from North Battleford, from Bruno, and from all throughout the land.

And I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, but more particularly the people from Eastend, Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately amend The Non-Profit Corporations Act and other legislation in order to protect volunteers from frivolous legal action, and prohibiting any legal action against any volunteer unless a court of competent jurisdiction first grants permission.

We have these petitions, Mr. Speaker, from 105 other people this morning. They are from all over the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions to present on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately amend The Non-Profit Corporations Act and other legislation in order to protect volunteers from frivolous legal actions, by prohibiting any legal action against any volunteer unless a court of competent jurisdiction first grants permission.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions come from the south-west of Saskatchewan, from the Frontier-Claydon areas of the province, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately amend The Non-Profit Corporations Act and other legislation in order to protect volunteers from frivolous legal actions, by prohibiting any legal action against any volunteer unless a court of competent jurisdiction first grant permission.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

These petitions come from the Coronach area of the province in support of Eastend.

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 petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime; and

Of citizens urging the government to commission an independent study to review the social impact of gambling; and

Of citizens urging the Assembly to cause the construction of a new hospital in La Loche.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: — Ms. Lorje, Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, presents its second report which is hereby tabled.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to present the second report of the Crown Corporations Committee for this session. In it we note that we have concluded our review of the 1994 and 1995 Crowns.

It is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that this morning in the library we had a modest little celebration of a quiet little legislative committee with a remarkably active history. I want to give my report on today's Crown matters in the context of that history. It is a history which in many ways mirrors the development of both the Saskatchewan government as an instrument of the people, and of the Saskatchewan economy for the past 50 years.

Yesterday I was pleased to pay tribute to the first 50 years of the Crown Investments Corporation. Today as I report on the work of the current Crown Corporations Committee, I am proud to recognize in the public record that we are carrying on a system begun by men — and one woman — of a visionary government that believed in public enterprise and public accountability of those enterprises.

Committees of the legislature are, like any other entity, creatures of their mandate. They take their significance from the magnitude of their subject. In Saskatchewan, Crown corporations are very significant to our government, to our economy, to our social fabric. They always have been and they currently are now.

As the chairperson of a legislative committee celebrating the history of an all-party tool of the legislature, I should point out that over time Crown corporations have been created by all parties. We've all had a go at creating new ones, and we've all performed our share of executions of old Crown corporations. One would never deny that ideology played a role in these decisions, but for all of us, representing all parties, Crowns are in the economic lifeblood of Saskatchewan.

But as with so many other accomplishments, I'm proud to note that it was the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government of Douglas, Brockelbank, Sturdy, Stone, and Beatrice Trew that created this standing committee to make those Crowns accountable to the legislature. In the 50 intervening years some things have changed, some things have not. For instance, Beatrice Trew, the member from Maple Creek and the grandmother of our own MLA (Member of the

Legislative Assembly) for Regina Coronation Park, was the first woman member of the Crown Corporations Committee.

In the minutes of the first meetings of the committee in 1947, the list of those present goes like this, present: Messieurs Darling, Hanson, Feeley, Patterson, and so on until the end where the minutes always say: and Mrs. Trew. The Crowns that that first committee oversaw included the Saskatchewan Power Commission, which was established in 1929, Saskatchewan Clay Products, Saskatchewan Wool Products, Saskatchewan Lake and Forest Products, SGIO (Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office), and Saskatchewan Airways. Some are still here, modified to the times; most are not.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not mentioning this anniversary celebration just to be sentimental, although there was quite a touching moment at our ceremony this morning when we paid tribute to Mrs. Beatrice Trew. She was 50 years old when she was appointed to that first Crown Corporations Committee. Today the committee itself is 50 years old. In 1997, it is 100 years since she was born and I am pleased to report to the Assembly that her grandson is Vice-Chair of the Crown Corporations Committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — He is carrying on a proud Trew tradition.

There is something very valuable, Mr. Speaker, and very instructive in taking a moment to go back to the beginning of the Crown Corporations Committee. It is instructive particularly for current members of all political persuasions, and it is simply this: the people who established this committee in 1947, the MLAs from the CCF and the Liberals, took their responsibilities very seriously.

If there were to be Crowns — and that was a given — they were going to be managed and directed in a twofold manner: one, they were going to work; and two, they were going to work for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan who owned them. They would be operated in a businesslike fashion and they would contribute to the social well-being of the province.

This is the double burden and the double duty of Crown corporations, and I would suggest, it is still their single defining virtue.

Those MLAs 50 years ago made sure that they would be involved in these Crowns, the people's business. They argued and fought and challenged each other to make sure that the people of Saskatchewan knew what was going on with their public enterprises — not unlike members of today's committee, I might add.

Members from all parties fought with executive government over how much they would be involved in the policy direction of the Crowns. And there were spirited arguments even then, on the value of public enterprise.

In the minutes of that first committee, I note that even back then, former premier Patterson, representing the Liberals of the

day, argued for privatization for some Crowns.

Moving now to 1997, today's committee members have some pretty big shoes to fill. We have some passionate, wise, committed committee standards to meet. We have historical precedents to honour. And you know, I don't think we're doing that bad a job. We, like former members, take our duties seriously. And we, like they, believe in the significance of our work and the value of the subject we cover.

In 50 years there have been good men and women serving the Crowns and overseeing the Crowns. I am happy, on behalf of the committee, to be able to pay tribute today to those who began the process 50 years ago.

Today's Crown Corporations Committee carries on their work in the service of the people of Saskatchewan. I am proud of the work the committee does and I thank all committee members on all sides of the House.

And in honour of those pioneers from all parties, I submit my report today. I do now move, seconded by the member from Saltcoats:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 33 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: how many applications for the farm fuel rebate were received in 1996; how many of these applications were approved; how many of these applications were rejected; how many of those applications which were refused were so refused because they came in after the deadline; what was the total cost to the government for the farm fuel rebate in 1996; and what was the total dollar amount applied for in those farm fuel rebate applications which were rejected because they came in after the deadline?

I have an additional question, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

I give notice that I shall on day no. 33 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: which health facility capital projects have been approved by the Department of Health since April 1, 1996; which health facility capital projects have been submitted to the Department of Health for approval and are currently awaiting such approval from the department; and of those health facility capital projects currently awaiting approval by the Department of Health, please give the dates that they were submitted to the

department for such approval.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, Mr. Charles Harnick, the Attorney General of Ontario, along with his ministerial assistant, David Gordon. Please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Harnick and I had the distinct pleasure of chairing the ministers of Justice's meeting on the first occasion that either one of us had attended the meeting. And since that meeting in May of 1996 in Ottawa, we've had a special bond in how to deal with certain of the issues. So I very much appreciate welcoming him here to Saskatchewan.

I'm also welcoming him here on behalf of the minister for SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat) as he is here to meet with other ministers related to aboriginal affairs.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you in your gallery, Mr. Andrew Waller. Mr. Waller is a librarian with the Lloydminster Public Library. And I would ask all members of the House to welcome not only him, but all librarians in the province and members of our library boards who are in Regina this weekend for the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Library Association.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a fine-looking group of students from Eastend, Saskatchewan. They are sitting in your galley, Mr. Speaker — 12 students from Eastend, Saskatchewan — and are accompanied by Marie Hanson and their bus driver, Randy Morris, whom I passed in the hallway and didn't recognize. Sorry, Randy. There you are.

And we're happy, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Environment from Indian Head-Wolseley has very graciously volunteered to join us after the question period in room 218 where we will discuss matters of importance about how the legislature works. We will also I'm sure talk about Eastend and its contribution to the environment, and things like Scotty and museums and flood waters and all kinds of great stuff.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and the Assembly, I would like to have all members please welcome this illustrious group.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you a group of students from my constituency from the community of St.

Isadore-de-Bellevue. We have with us 10 grade 11 and 12 students from that community and they are accompanied by their teachers, Terence Gaudet and Marie Anne de Larminat, and the chaperon Thérèse Gareau.

These students are enjoying an educational tour of the legislature and many of the sights in the city of Regina. So I look forward to meeting with you later on after question period, and I'd ask all members of the Assembly to please join me in welcoming the group from Bellevue.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the member from Cypress Hills in welcoming the grade 12 students from Eastend along with their teacher, Ms. Hanson, and bus driver, Randy. I have a particular interest in this group of students because my daughter is in grade 11 in Eastend and I would like to meet with them to see how my daughter is doing. And thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleague from Cypress Hills and my colleague from Indian Head-Milestone in welcoming the group from Eastend. The teacher, Marie Hanson, taught in my own constituency of Manor for a few years and I'd like to welcome her to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Special Librarian's Day

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year at this time I stood up and used words in this legislature that my mother would never have had in her vocabulary. Words like "cyberjob," "cybrarian," and the almost colloquial "cyberheap." I almost grasped then the meaning of this new language, but I clearly understood why I was speaking — as I do now.

I'm happy to report that today is International Special Librarians Day, the one day in the year when we recognize the year-round work of the Legislative Library staff, the staff that keeps us informed, up to date, and sometimes even literate.

A special librarian, as the term suggests, is one who provides special information to a special clientele. This includes legislative librarians.

As the Chair of the Crown Corporations Committee said this morning, we have today in the legislature a very visible reminder of the special, valuable, and quick work the librarians perform. The 50th anniversary celebration was in large part made possible because they did much of the footwork.

The theme for this year is "Putting knowledge to work," and that in a nutshell, or as we would say today, that in a CD-ROM (compact disc read-only memory), is exactly what they do.

There is a veritable Noah's flood of knowledge available to us, so much so that the volume can interfere with practical use.

It is Marian Powell and her staff of factual magicians that help us day to day, fact by fact, report by report. I ask all members to join me in congratulating them and giving them a sincere thank-you for the work that they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Express 16th Anniversary Tour

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members of this Assembly will be familiar with Saskatchewan Express, a touring musical revue renowned in the province for its fun and heart-warming performances.

Auditions this year were very tough, but I am happy to announce that Jeremy Elder, a very talented member of my constituency, was chosen from among 86 performers. I would like to congratulate Jeremy on such an outstanding achievement. He was one of 11 vocalists chosen for the 16th anniversary summer tour.

Saskatchewan Express will be travelling to all corners of the province this summer and I would encourage all the members present and the people of Saskatchewan to take in an outstanding performance by Jeremy and the other members of the troupe. Congratulations once again, Jeremy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Award for Prince Albert Television Station

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any new words to use today, but I do have very positive congratulations to make to Prince Albert television station, CIPA-CKBI, on receiving a gold Can Pro award in the category of drama special for its production of *The Missing Bell of Batoche*. The Can Pro awards of excellence recognize superior achievement in Canadian local or speciality programming.

The Missing Bell of Batoche was indeed a worthy candidate for this award as it tells a story that belongs to the Metis community in the Prince Albert area, to be shared with the people of Saskatchewan. I hope the recognition received by CIPA-CKBI will encourage all local stations in Saskatchewan to keep telling our community stories and to assist in keeping our vibrant history alive.

This award is a tribute to the professional and hard-working staff involved in the production of *The Missing Bell of Batoche*.

I would ask all members of the legislature to join with me in congratulating everyone who was involved in this production. They truly do deserve this recognition. And again, congratulations, CKBI-CIPA TV.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agrologists Recognize Journalist Ron Walter

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently Ron Walter, a reporter with the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* was given some well-deserved recognition. In addition to his regular journalistic duties, Mr. Walter has worked diligently throughout his career reporting local agricultural stories through the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* and the *Moose Jaw This Week*.

The Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists has recognized Ron for his contributions to agriculture by admitting him to the institute as an honorary member. As a member agrologist since 1984, I'd like to offer my congratulations to Ron and thank him for his insightful reporting on agriculture issues, and his continuing effort to raise awareness about this very important industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Condominium Project In Manitou Beach

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, most of us are aware that tourism is the fastest growing industry in our province. In 1995 it employed over 40,000 people and contributed \$1.1 billion to our provincial economy. Of that \$1.1 billion, 518 million was in rural Saskatchewan. Without a doubt our tourism industry has significant impact on our rural areas.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mayor Arnold Strueby in the village of Manitou Beach for the announcement of a new condo project that is scheduled to begin construction later this year.

As many members realize, Mr. Speaker, Manitou Beach is famous for its healing waters of the mineral spa, the best in Canada. Thousands of tourists from across North America visit the community yearly. This new condo project will enhance Manitou Beach's reputation as a desired tourist destination.

This project is the second of its type in the village in the past few years, as an individual entrepreneur built one a couple of years ago.

Much of the credit for this initiative must go to the local economic development committee, who researched the viability of these projects. These condos are aimed at attracting retired individuals and are constructed to be fully wheelchair accessible and will in all likelihood make a significant economic contribution to the community.

I would like to congratulate all the individuals involved in the planning of this project. It is the initiative and the desire of individuals to build their communities that make Saskatchewan such a great province. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Internet Web Site on Dinosaurs

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to be able to give a members' statement, particularly with

guests here from Eastend and some of the other statements on tourism and Internet.

As you'll know, a few years ago Saskatchewan became a hotbed for palaeontologists searching for dinosaur remains in the Eastend area. Discovery of the now famous T-Rex named Scotty not only stimulated further searches, but also inspired Jim Fold of Minds Eye new media of Regina to construct a web site dedicated to dinosaurs generally, but in particular to dinosaurs in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you might think that that would include the home page for the member from Maple Creek, but in fact this web site is named "Fun Finds, Hidden Treasures in Saskatchewan" and is geared towards everyone. It is both educational and entertaining, unlike the member from Maple Creek.

Mr. Speaker, this new web site will allow Internet users worldwide, access to information on Saskatchewan and our dinosaur discoveries.

An Hon. Member: — Cypress Hills.

Mr. Thomson: — Oh Cypress Hills. My goodness. I've got to get this straight sooner or later here. But it will also promote another part of our province's culture and history.

Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry in the province will benefit from this new web site as more and more people become aware of and interested in the fascinating and intriguing places in Saskatchewan.

I want to conclude by congratulating the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the many people and organizations in Eastend, and the Saskatchewan Economic Development Internet access application development fund, which is responsible for helping put this program forward. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sports Memorabilia Auction in Rosthern

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many times communities in this province demonstrate their spirit, pride, and cohesiveness as communities through special events. Although these events are a regular occurrence in our province, we should not become accustomed to them and overlook their importance. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge a community event that has taken place recently in the town of Rosthern.

As a measure to help raise funds for the new multi-purpose centre for the elementary school, the residents of Rosthern organized a sports memorabilia auction that was held on April 10.

Included in the auction were items such as autographed hockey sticks, jerseys, and shirts from well-known stars such as Wayne Gretzky, Eric Lindros, Wendel Clark, Donovan Bailey and tennis star, Pete Sampras. The centrepiece item in the auction,

Mr. Speaker, was a one-of-a-kind signed portrait of Ken Dryden, which was painted by local artist, Elaine Unrau-Schellenberg.

Special guests taking part in the auction included Ken Dryden as keynote speaker, Roughriders Robert Mimbs and Aaron Ruffin, U of S (University of Saskatchewan) football coach Brian Towriss, and a multitude of radio and TV personalities.

Mr. Speaker, the auction was a success as the community raised over \$15,000 that will be directed towards the new centre.

I would personally like to congratulate the residents of Rosthern and area for the success of the auction and their efforts to enhance their community. Events like this, Mr. Speaker, should not be left unrecognized.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Vital Role of Community Planning

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important, indeed vital, role of community planning. Nothing is more fundamental to the physical, social and economic growth of a community than a development plan resulting from community planning.

Mr. Speaker, community planners are concerned with the promotion of health, safety and welfare of the public, the prevention of overcrowding, the securing of adequate light, air and access, the value of land and the conservation of property values, the character of physical development.

Mr. Speaker, community planning — and especially urban planning — also involves the efficient and economical utilization of Saskatchewan's greatest physical resource, the land. That is why, Mr. Speaker, all members of the legislature know . . . Let me rephrase that — most members of the legislature know that we try to park our vehicles between, and not on, the yellow lines in our parking area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Condie to Queen Elizabeth Power Line

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government proposed construction of a transmission line across the South Saskatchewan River near Saskatoon as part of the Condie power line project, the Meewasin Valley Authority raised its objections. The group claimed the overhead line would be a hazard to birds flying through the river valley and called on the government to bury the line.

The Court of Queen's Bench ruled in February that The Meewasin Valley Authority Act has no application to a public land which is used or occupied by the Government of Saskatchewan.

In other words, the court ruled SaskPower is not required to apply to the Authority for permission to construct this portion of the line. However, this group is appealing the decision to a higher court, Mr. Speaker, and in spite of the fact that this appeal is still making its way through the courts, SaskPower began construction of the overhead transmission line spanning the river about two weeks ago, and has now completed this aspect of the project.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister in charge of SaskPower explain why this work has proceeded while the matter is still before the courts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the member sort of through, if I could, the chronology of events. And he is accurate that on February 19 the court approved the procedure with the project. The appeal has been scheduled for May 7. I want to point out to the member that the MVA (Meewasin Valley Authority) was notified of the corporation's intention to proceed, and they had the opportunity, but didn't apply for an injunction pending the outcome of the appeal.

SaskPower has completed the project. It was done between, as I understand it, March 17 and April 4. I want to point out to the member that the importance of supplying a sustainable source of energy to people in northern Saskatchewan is very much dependent on the completion of the Condie-QE line. That consumption level will be required for the winter, for the coming winter.

If the Court of Appeal would make the decision that it was inappropriate and SaskPower did not have the authority to put an overhead line, there would be opportunity to construct an underground line, which would take some time; which would require in all likelihood some environmental due diligence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And at what costs to the taxpayer would it be if you have to redo the line, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have seen on many occasions this government demonstrate its arrogance and contempt. And the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) would be . . . the GRIP fiasco has laid a good example of that last year. Now it would appear they have reached new heights, Mr. Speaker. It seems awful strange that this work was started and completed in such a short time frame before the May 7 appeal date in the courts.

Will the minister explain again if it is merely a coincidence that the work was completed before the court date, or did he fast-track this project to ensure it was completed before judgement might possibly impact his plans?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, there are number of issues surrounding this. First let me describe to the member the cost of that overhead line is in the neighbourhood of \$300,000. Whether it be a temporary line or whether it be a permanent line, it has to be constructed in such a fashion that public safety is in fact a part of the decision. It wouldn't be appropriate to put . . . a temporary line would cause the risk of public life. So quite clearly that is an appropriate expenditure, and it's been built up to the appropriate standards.

I want to say to the member that with all major construction projects such as the Condie-QE line, there will be an imposition on people's lands as the lines have to go somewhere. But I think the member will agree with me, as the member from Athabasca will agree, that we need to strive to ensure a sustainable and a safe and a reasonable cost supply of energy for northern Saskatchewan, and that's part of what the Condie-QE line will allow to happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Reconstruction Charges

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just when the people of Saskatchewan think they have seen this government demonstrate all of the arrogance and contempt it possibly can, it has been taken to a new level.

Today in the Crown Corporations Committee meeting questions were raised about this government's decision to not include SaskPower's new construction charge as part of its revenues and net income. The Provincial Auditor remarked that it should be the practice of SaskPower to disclose all monies collected from its customers as revenues, a suggestion this government has apparently ruled out.

Mr. Speaker, surely the people of Saskatchewan deserve to know whether or not the Crowns are hiding money from the people, or just starting another slush fund.

Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge — and for that matter, the Provincial Auditor's — we are the only province that utility rate increases are approved by cabinet.

Will the minister in charge of SaskPower tell us why his government refuses to include these funds as revenue, given the fact they were received through the corporation's customers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to answer this in this way: if the member would open the annual report, he would see that it is very clearly identified and accounted for — both the revenue flow that came from it and the expenditures.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well that the member from the Crown Corporations Committee review this morning will be well aware of the fact that the industry does not support the Provincial Auditor's position with respect to this.

So let me, Mr. Speaker, quote from *Hansard* from this morning.

We have had major accounting firm . . . we've had opinion from three major accounting firms in this country, Ernst & Young, Deloitte Touche, and KPMG, who all say that the approach the Provincial Auditor took on this issue is wrong.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that . . . and I'm going to quote:

The money is going to be used to construct assets in future years which will generate the electricity, the service that you receive in future years. And therefore it's entirely appropriate under the accounting rules to defer the item and record it as an element of profit and loss in those future years. It's not appropriate to record it in the current year. And the Provincial Auditor is wrong in his opinion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, what I would presume that the minister's answer is saying, that this province with them in power does not need a Provincial Auditor — we might as well just get rid of him.

Mr. Speaker, when the Provincial Auditor raised his concerns about this issue today, the minister in charge of SaskPower indicated that the Provincial Auditor is trying to interfere in public policy. Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor is entrusted with the task of holding government accountable. It is his responsibility to ensure this government manages its finances in a proper fashion.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Provincial Auditor's job is that if he finds any irregularities or concerns with the accountability to do with the province's finances, he brings it to our attention — the public and the opposition.

Will the minister in charge of SaskPower tell us why he is trying to undermine the mandate of our Provincial Auditor?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, there is not an attempt to undermine the mandate of anyone or any individual. This corporation has publicly accounted for funds that it is responsible for — that has been confirmed by three major accounting firms in this province, all of whom have said that it is accounted for in the appropriate fashion.

I want to say what the member . . . Mr. Ellis from Ernst & Young had to say about the approach that SaskPower took, and I'm quoting from *Hansard*:

In this case, we have a Provincial Auditor who has his own views on the accounting. On the other side, what has the corporation done? It has researched the area, formed its own opinions as to how it should be accounted for. It has obtained the support of Rupert James, its auditor. Rupert James in turn has done the right professional thing and consulted with the experts in his firm — me. I have prepared an opinion in support of that. We have in turn . . . The company has in turn consulted with two other major firms. The three largest firms in this country have stated

that this accounting is appropriate. That's six — six strikes — six views. The Provincial Auditor has not obtained . . . (one) independent opinion . . . (to) support . . . his position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipal Governments

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that Ernst & Young are hired by SaskPower, so why wouldn't they side with SaskPower? The Provincial Auditor is for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to change directions now and I would like to once again ring up Lily. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House three members of the Liberal opposition questioned the government about its \$29 million cut in revenue sharing to municipal governments.

The minister in charge of Municipal Government responded by saying, and I quote: "There is no such thing as savage cuts . . . except in the member's imagination."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I met with dozens of municipal government officials recently, and they provided me with figures which underline these savage cuts. As an example, the conditional grant for the RM (rural municipality) of Shellbrook has been cut from \$160,000 to \$63,000 — a reduction of 61 per cent.

Will the minister explain how she can sit back and explain how these cuts are anything but savage?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know from his experience in local government that there are two sides to the grants; one is the conditional, one is the unconditional.

The unconditional revenue-sharing pool has been reduced, and we acknowledge that. We gave municipalities a year's notice to prepare for that and we devised a new distribution formula which ensured that although the size of the pool reduced by 42 per cent, no municipality would receive a cut of more than 50 per cent.

He also knows that in the conditional side of the grant, the money has to be spent in order to receive the cost-sharing part of the revenue-sharing formula. So if a municipality's activity in road building, or whatever the shared project was, was reduced, well then the grant would be reduced. The member knows this, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the minister indicated yesterday that our municipal governments have adequate resources and that their future is secure. However, the local government leaders I'm speaking with maintain their future is anything but secure, given the government's continual downloading.

Mr. Speaker, municipal governments are providing me with

figures showing drastic cuts to their unconditional grants also. An example: the RM of Meota has seen its funding cut from \$53,000 to 18,000 — 66 per cent reduction. RM of Meadow Lake has seen its funding cut from \$65,000 to \$6,000 — 91 per cent cut. RM of Golden West has been cut from \$37,000 to \$2,000, a reduction of 95 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I then have RMs saying they're going to have to raise their mill rates six times, four times.

Madam Minister, what are you prepared to do to address this financial crisis that you are forcing onto the backs of our local governments? Will you re-examine this recent slashing of funds to those same municipal governments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the municipalities were given a year's notice on the extent of their revenue-sharing cuts. I think in addition to that, last fall in September we announced the offset of the levies.

We have cleaned up the municipal tax base, Mr. Speaker, in terms of taking the responsibility for social assistance payments, public health levies, and the hospital levy from the municipal tax base; so that they now have that room reserved for themselves, which makes up in part, Mr. Speaker, for the reduction in revenue sharing. They no longer have to remit funding for social services, public health, or hospitals to the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Changes to The Police Act

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, this morning you met with the Estevan mayor, John Len. Mayor Len is very concerned about The Police Act due to the recent incident in Estevan where a police officer was charged, and pleaded guilty, for assaulting his daughter.

The community is outraged that the officer received an absolute discharge, and that the officer has not yet been removed from the force. Unfortunately the community's hands are tied under The Police Act.

Mr. Minister, I know you can't comment on the specifics of this particular case, but what changes are you considering to The Police Act to speed up and streamline disciplinary actions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. What has happened in this particular situation is that it's still in the process, and we'll allow the process to proceed. What I have been doing and what the department has been doing, has been meeting with the police commissioners, who usually are the mayors, as well as the chiefs of police on one side, if you can put it that way. And we've also been meeting with the police associations who have other concerns about job security and other things.

This process has been ongoing for at least two years and possibly longer on some of these issues. And I've met regularly with them; people in my department have met with them; and we are working on achieving the balance so that we can deal with this matter in the way this government always does, a fair and even-handed way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, both the justice system and your government are sending out some pretty conflicting messages these days. Mayor Len points out that a farmer was recently fined \$800 for starving his pigs, but the police officer who assaulted his daughter got an absolute discharge.

The member from Estevan recently said, the community should be lenient as this was his first offence. The member from Estevan seems to be saying it's okay to hit a woman, so long as you've only done it once.

Mr. Minister, it's time for this legislature to send a message loud and clear — it's never okay to hit a woman, not once, not now, not ever. Mr. Minister, will you send that message by changing The Police Act to ensure officers who commit this kind of assault are removed from the force?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's absolutely clear that this government has a very firm policy on violence in family situations; violence in any place in the community. And it's unfortunate that the member asks a question that I can't respond to on the specific situation, but what I would say is that we in this government have been working very carefully on the issue of domestic violence because we believe that is a very insidious problem that causes all kinds of other problems in our community.

We passed The Victims of Domestic Violence Act which now we've just received notice that the Government of Prince Edward Island has now passed this Act, basically copying what we've done. We know other jurisdictions are interested in this. We think and we know that we, as a social democratic government, have been working very hard with, primarily women, but all parts of the community, to make sure that we do everything we can to rid our society of domestic violence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Power Line Contract

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. The Liberals have found out in the paper that the Condie project is proceeding. Well, Mr. Minister, we found out that the Condie project — a \$5 million contract — has been awarded to a company by the name of Remcon from Prince Albert. And, Mr. Minister, last year Remcon walked off the Coteau Hills pipeline project supervised by the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) office in Rosetown.

I understand the Coteau Hills and the PFRA are currently in litigation with Remcon over this matter. We have now learned that the Condie power line contract is being given to Remcon without a bond.

Mr. Minister, why would you award a \$5 million contract to anyone without a bond, let alone to a company with a troubled track record like Remcon?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that due diligence was done, that this award was in fact . . . part of it was tendered to Remcon who were the low bidder. I can also say that the management of the corporation has gone through this process on numerous occasions with numerous different contacts and Remcon, as I said, was successful.

With respect to due diligence and Remcon's ability to do the work, you . . . the member opposite can be assured that they will in fact do due diligence and scrutiny has been done by the corporation and they will in fact complete that portion of the Condie-QE line.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, will you give us the assurance that the company who gets the Condie job will be required to have a bond?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that the corporation will have the ability, that all due diligence was done, and that the corporation's interests have been served.

With respect to a bond, I am not aware that that corporation has not received . . . got a bond to cover this. I will be checking this with my officials to ensure that all measure of due diligence has been done. I'll be reporting to the member very shortly after question period, as soon as I hear from my officials.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Reconstruction Charge

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, this morning you and Jack Messer got an accounting lesson from the Provincial Auditor. And as previous members said, it turns out SaskPower is gouging consumers even more than it is currently admitting, because you're not including the so-called reconstruction charge in the bottom line of SaskPower's profits. According to the Provincial Auditor, that means SaskPower's profits last year were actually 153 million, not 139 million as reported.

Mr. Minister, why are you trying to hide this \$14 million tax grab? No one else in the province can receive income and not count it. Are you simply trying to cover up the fact that you are gouging consumers? Either count it or allow everyone else to set aside non-taxable income for the replacement of equipment.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the

member opposite that what he has just done and what members of the Liberal Party have just done is attack the credibility of three major accounting firms in this country: Ernst & Young, Deloitte & Touche, and KPMG. And what they also have done is attack the credibility of Mr. Ron Ellis and Mr. Rupert James, who happen to disagree with the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you a little bit of Mr. Ellis's credentials. And this is a quote from *Hansard* this morning. And what I do is I challenge both of you to go outside of this House, make these statements outside of this House before Mr. Ellis and Mr. James, who are in this legislature waiting to respond. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote from Mr. Ellis, who says:

I act as an adviser to the Auditor General of Canada, to the Provincial Auditor of Newfoundland, and to the Provincial Auditor in Alberta. To my knowledge, and certainly in all the cases they have discussed with me, where they find an accounting issue — and they disagree with the accounting followed by the corporation — before going public and criticizing that accounting, they obtain a second professional opinion, independent opinion, from another firm, my firm, or another one of the big six firms.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor will not get an opinion that is in keeping with his position from any one of those six. And if he can, he should get that opinion and table it in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High-risk Youth

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the province of Manitoba has clearly recognized the importance of identifying high-risk young people. Our neighbour to the east has recently finished conducting a study which reveals it has 4,500 high-risk kids with a cost attached to that province of \$1.4 million a day for treatment and other services. This review was conducted to look at how to improve services to troubled kids. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba realizes the importance of reaching out to these troubled young people early enough to make a difference. I wish I could say the same thing about this government, Mr. Speaker, but I can't

My question to the government is: when will the province identify how many young people in Saskatchewan are at risk so that we can determine the cost and the best way to help them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to first indicate that in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have a very comprehensive treatment, assessment, and observation program that we have to ensure that we closely monitor the number of individuals that are affected by addiction gaming in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, just recently, within the last month, Mr. Speaker, within the last six weeks I've been to Manitoba, have had a discussion with the minister responsible for gaming in Manitoba, who told me that prior to them implementing their

study, they wanted to ensure that they had a complete review of all of the gaming that was being done in their province. They wanted an assurance that all of the gaming that they were going to initiate in their province has been stabilized and then prepare to do the review.

In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we are just completing this process and are making that kind of an examination as we speak in this House today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would challenge that member simply by telling him that your government has not even done an impact study on gaming in this province yet to determine the high level of addiction that we have.

This government has not done a lot of things. It has not set up a task force to identify youth at risk, as we have suggested. It has not done a study . . . allowed the Children's Advocate an all-party committee to review and conduct studies on everything surrounding youth at risk. And you have not done a great deal of things that we have suggested, including adopt my measures to combat child prostitution Act.

Mr. Speaker, the government is maintaining its meeting the needs of children, but how can this government be doing that if they don't even know how many children fall into a high-risk category? The Manitoba report concluded, and I quote:

These kids may be costing that much because we didn't even start early enough. Early intervention is what makes the difference.

And I am asking now the Justice minister again: please commit to a task force comprised of all stakeholders to work on solutions to the problems plaguing our young people, who are the very future of our province. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question on behalf of the government very briefly. And I want to say two things, if I may, to the hon. member opposite, who brings to the question period an obvious sincerity — one can see that — but obviously an unfortunate tendency to politicize a problem which is very, very complex. It involves social, economic, cultural, and educational considerations. And she continues to politicize it, and in so doing, diminishes the sincerity that she brings to this particular issue — without any recognition of our children's action plan; without any recognition the children's action plan has been recognized internationally and nationally.

We acknowledge that more needs to be done. We understand that the problem is not only a Manitoba problem or a Saskatchewan problem; it's a kids-at-risk problem right across the country. That's why we're fighting for a child national tax credit program; the dental program.

Why in the world do you insist on some form of simplistic solutions, in a partisan way, about this issue? What you should be doing is raising the consciousness of this matter in a sincere and positive way and not in a shamelessly political, and if I may say so, almost blatantly inaccurate way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I wish to table pursuant to section 14 of The Provincial Auditor Act, the *Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on Executive Council and SaskPower*.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 1

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 1 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few remarks about the Bill that we're speaking about today in terms of Bill No. 1, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act. While the Act is generally a housekeeping Act in terms of the reassessment and security. On the whole issue of the role of The Northern Municipalities Act, I wish to elaborate. First of all, give a brief of what the northern municipalities are currently encountering in their duties as northern municipal governments.

Again being a former mayor of my town of Ile-a-la-Crosse, it does give me somewhat of an insight as to some of the problems associated with The Northern Municipalities Act. And that's why any amendment, no matter how large or how small or how insignificant, especially when it comes to housekeeping to a very important issue of reassessment . . . we must make sure that we first of all get the Assembly here to understand what the northern municipal government is all about.

On many occasions most of the northern municipalities in northern Saskatchewan are local aboriginal people. On many occasions there are also people of non-aboriginal ancestry on these committees, and it's really a cohesive team.

The municipal structure in the North consists of the mayor, on some occasions six councillors, and other occasions five, and still on other occasions even a smaller number than that.

(1430)

However, Mr. Speaker, the role of northern municipal

governments is quite different, significantly different, than that of southern mayors and councillors — the small amount of tax base in northern Saskatchewan that we currently enjoy, and also the fact that we're isolated communities. We don't have no RM structure. We have very little work being done in the regional economic development authority concept. It's in its infancy stages.

There is a huge tract of land which is being administered by the current provincial government in terms of royalties and revenues and leases from mining companies, forestry companies, tourism outfits, and the list goes on and on.

So any time we speak about reassessment, what you're dealing with here is a group of northern communities administered by local people and really have very little influence in terms of what happens on the lands in and around each of their municipal structures.

As well, it's also complemented by the fact that many communities in the North are also governed by band and band council — a chief and the band councillors.

So there are two sides of the coin in northern Saskatchewan and we want to make sure that we get to understand that.

What does reassessment really mean for northern Saskatchewan? The impacts are yet to be felt. Most administrators that we spoke to still don't see a significant shift in terms of the amount of income they're going to receive at a local level. And any amendments that talk about some of these things, they certainly want more information on.

And in essence, how does the amendment affect assessment to the mining sector, Mr. Speaker? There's a lot of questions that the municipal governments have in terms of, is this assessment going to diminish the royalty structure, is it going to diminish the lease payments that are paid to the northern revenue-sharing trust account?

These are questions that they have. And to understand what northern municipal government is all about, you have to really be in . . . to live there and to see that the mayor and council play a larger role than what they do in southern communities. They're dealing with housing problems; they're dealing with welfare case problems. They're dealing with economic development; they're dealing with social development. They're dealing with everything from garbage collection, tax collection, to even patrolling the community for stray dogs. And the list goes on and on.

So in that sense they're . . . practically, mayors and councillors play a significantly different role than that of southern Saskatchewan. So I think it's very important . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Lorje: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great deal of pleasure for me to introduce the Member of Parliament for Regina-Lumsden and the past Chair of the Crown Corporations Committee, Mr. John Solomon.

He came to Saskatchewan in response to the invitation to attend the 50th anniversary celebration of the Crown Corporations Committee. Unfortunately, because of the vagaries of airline schedules, instead of getting here at 10:30, he arrived at 2:30. Nevertheless, he retains a keen interest in the affairs of Crown corporations as well as a very well-developed sense of injustice for the automobile gas prices and the drug prices that are current in this country.

I would ask all members to welcome Mr. John Solomon to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 1 (continued)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess one of the big problems that we have in northern Saskatchewan communities is that there is very little financial compensation in support for some of the work that is required in these northern communities. And most of the grief and the problems are generally assumed and generally beared upon by local mayors and council.

So the role of the mayors and councils in many of these communities is a very, very significant role. The mayors and councils don't move in terms of any planning they have for the community. The community generally stays the same. So local leadership is very, very vital to these northern communities.

On the same token, when you talk about reassessment and the impacts of some of these changes, there's a great pile of questions that need to be answered. And as you're aware, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan they have what they call a northern revenue-sharing trust account in which the proceeds of leased lands from the Crown — Crown land — in northern Saskatchewan all get collected by governments, and then they use a portion of those dollars to grant to these northern municipalities for some of their capital works needs.

A lot of these communities are in severe problems in terms of some of their local infrastructure needs, and this small fund is what they use to compensate for extra costs of supplying the community with either extra equipment or expansion or other examples of community needs. So when the northern revenue-sharing trust account dollars are concerned, and certainly are being impacted by reassessment, a whole pile of questions begin to get asked by northern leaders.

So in the northern community of . . . northern communities in general, when you have reassessment in any way, shape or form, there are questions. It's much like myself being a landowner, having somebody else represent me at a hearing in terms of the assessment.

In general that's what's happening in northern Saskatchewan. The communities are living on the land but a lot of the fees and the taxes are being considered and being discussed by the provincial government. Now with the mining sector, and again that really concerns a lot of people in terms of what's going on here.

To appreciate what the northern communities are doing, they're doing a significant amount of work for the meagre amount of dollars that they're getting. And many people consider the northern municipalities rich. They figure there's a lot of money going into them. But, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is there is very little money going into these communities. And any time you begin to impact and affect the meagre amount of monies going into these communities to the northern revenue-sharing trust account, questions get asked.

So in reference to the municipality . . . or Bill No. 1, we want to make sure and encourage the Minister of Northern Affairs, or the Minister of Municipal Government, to sit down with the northern communities and explain to them what reassessment — the impact of reassessment — really is. And until, unless, they do that we cannot have good dialogue; we cannot have thoughtful discussion on how we can really come on with new legislation in reference to reassessment.

So at this point in time the questions remain, and I therefore move we adjourn the motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The hon. member's motion to adjourn is out of order. He has previously moved to adjourn debate, and debate will continue.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a very few points. These Bills are virtually identical and largely housekeeping. They bring the affected legislation into line with the new division of duties between municipalities and health boards under The Public Health Act. They also implement the additional delays for reassessment. Some other minor changes are also made to rather obsolete clauses.

We don't have a great deal of difficulty, and we think it . . . we will further examine in detail in the Committee of the Whole, but no general comment is needed any further I don't think, at this point.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is of concern to me is that we have the additional phase-in period provided, but so far as we are aware, there isn't a single northern municipality which is going to avail itself of the increased phase-in period. I think this calls for some answers from the Minister of Municipal Government as to what the purpose is.

As I see it, there are at least two separate problems here. One,

of course, that the six-year phase-in was only announced after the year for reassessment had already commenced. It was announced of course the end of January of this year at the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention. Reassessment was to commence effective January 1, 1997.

Well if our municipalities require tax tools in order to deal with the tax shifts that are going on this year as a result of reassessment, then as I said yesterday, these tax tools should've been in place at least a year ahead of time. The reassessment figures and the valuation figures from our assessment agency should have been in place at least one year ahead of time.

It is my submission that if these had been in place last spring, instead of they're still not fully in place now, our municipalities could much better have dealt with the problems of the tax shifts created in reassessment and would have been in a far better position to set their policy and decide how to deal with the various items and tax shifts.

Instead we have some so-called tax tools such as the six-year phase-in which we are bringing to legislation in this province this year, that appears to amount to a big zero, Mr. Speaker. As far as we're aware, not one rural municipal government is using the six-year phase-in, not one northern municipal government is using the six-year phase-in, and I believe maybe one urban.

Whether or not the six-year phase-in would have been a valuable tool had it been brought in a year ago, when it should have, I'm not able to say. But at least the tax tools, the powers given to municipalities, would have had more meaning if they had had a proper amount of time to look at assessed values, to look at taxation policy, and then decide on the appropriate mix.

I frankly wonder why the minister is proceeding with the six-year phase-in Bill when in point of fact the indications she has are that not one municipality is interested in using the six-year phase-in. So what's the purpose of this Bill at all?

The other point in terms of the six-year phase-in that needs to be said is that of course our problems in reassessment in Saskatchewan are created because we last had a full-scale reassessment in 1965. That is far too long to leave this difficult process. And because it is so out of date, we have tremendous tax shifts created.

Now the province tells us that in order to avoid a similar problem in the future, the intention is to have six-year . . . a three-year rolling reassessment. Now three-year rolling reassessment, Mr. Speaker, would mean that we will have a new reassessment in the year 2000 — three years from today — and yet a six-year phase-in.

I simply fail to understand how you can have a six-year phase-in of an assessment that is going to be out of date within three years. If you reassess within three years, but you're still phasing in the old assessment, it seems to me that the whole system starts to look pretty chaotic.

So I think that our government, our provincial government, has

simply not aided municipalities to deal with the problems of reassessment. They should have ensured that the assessment agency had the assessment figures to our municipal governments a year ago. They should have had taxation policy and the tax tools in the hands of our municipal governments a year ago.

And if they had done that, then I predict that reassessment could have proceeded far smoother with far more predictability and far more acceptance and understanding by ratepayers than what has been the case; that the reason for the dislocation caused this year has been because municipal governments and ratepayers simply have not been informed of what the score is; and an eleventh hour decision to move from three-year phase-in to six-year phase-in is simply not a solution at all, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 3 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because the ongoing dialogue continues daily with our municipalities in light of what this government has done in terms of the downloading to both our urban and rural municipalities, we'd like to not proceed with this Bill. So I would once again move adjournment of this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

(1445)

Bill No. 2

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 2 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the comments I have just made about the northern municipal amendments also apply of course to the rural municipal amendments. Those comments I think bear repetition but perhaps I will spare members opposite the full repetition, if I may.

However I do think that before we proceed with this Bill, that it really . . . we really should hear from the Minister of Municipal Government as to why she's proceeding with the six-year phase-in when, as I understand it, not one rural municipal government is going to employ the six-year phase-in. What point, what purpose, does this amendment have?

If rural councils were telling us that the six-year phase-in was valuable to them and would assist them to deal with the problems of reassessment, I would certainly be pleased to support it. The indications however, are that not one municipal council will be using the six-year phase-in, so I guess, as the

kids say nowadays, what's your point? And how can you have a six-year phase-in when there's a three-year reassessment in the year 2000?

So the whole thing is 11th hour. It's desperate; it's confusing; it's chaotic. It does nothing to address the situation and I really think that before we proceed to second reading, we should hear from the minister as to why the six-year phase-in is of benefit here when not one rural municipal government appears interested in using it.

And for that reason, until we can hear from the minister on her reasons as to what possible value or purpose this Bill is, I would move adjournment of the debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 4 — The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 39

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 39 — The Multiculturalism Act** be now read a second time.

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

Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 25 — The Gas Licensing Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

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

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

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to bring a point of order before you retire.

The Speaker: — Leave is not required in order to present a point of order. What is the hon. member's point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, on April 15 while you were not in the chair, certain comments were made by the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland which are of great concern to me and to my colleagues.

And if I may refer, Mr. Speaker, to page 875 of the proceedings

of that date, the member for Saskatoon Sutherland made a number of statements directly attacking the integrity of the hon. member for Humboldt, and to a somewhat more limited extent, the hon. member for Kelvington-Wadena, including words like shameful, dishonest, deliberate twisting of the truth, and referring to the hon. member as a discredit to this institution.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this is a violation both of the principles of unparliamentary language and is also offensive to rule 32. And I would ask Mr. Speaker to review the statements that I have directed to the . . . directed Your Honour to. And it is my respectful submission that the member for Saskatoon Sutherland should be asked to withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Speaker, I think that these statements would be objectionable when made against any hon. member of this House, but particularly to a member who has clearly shown a long commitment to the issue of child poverty, to which she was speaking at the time.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I recall the remarks made by the member from Saskatoon Sutherland that the hon. member from North Battleford refers. I recall at that time also that the Speaker was in the chair, and that the Speaker was quite . . . was listening to the statements made by the member and that there were . . . all of the comments made by the member were quite in order.

And I would also refer to Beauchesne's, the section on content of speeches. Had the member made remarks in his debate that were not sanctioned by use as a member, I'm certain that the Speaker at that time would have raised it and brought it to the member's attention.

Therefore I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this point is clearly out of order.

The Speaker: — I've listened to the remarks made, and I want to thank the hon. member for North Battleford for bringing the point of order and the Government Whip for his remarks on the point of order raised by the hon. member for North Battleford.

It, first of all, is permissible for members to raise a point of order related to comments made by members in debate. That's not an uncommon occurrence and it is not improper for that to be done.

It should also be noted that in the course of debate, members clearly have the right to express views, and differences of views are not grounds for finding debate to be out of order.

I do want to remind all hon. members that in bringing debate to this Chamber, that we are all bound by the rule 28 which does require that debate take place through the Chair.

And also rule 32, which does require that debate take place with an environment and confines of respect that are befitting debate in this Assembly by members who are elected to represent the citizens of our province.

I recognize as well that passionate debate belongs in this

Assembly.

Having made those remarks, I want to remind all hon. members that in bringing debate to this Assembly, that it is always in the best interest of the institution that the debate reflect the tone of respect that citizens, I think, have come to expect and recognize as appropriate in these chambers.

Having heard the remarks of both hon. members and brought these matters to the attention of the House, I must also remind hon. members and point out that it is a practice of this House that in bringing a point of order, that the point of order must be brought at the earliest possible time in which it is possible to do that.

And that will be . . . Order. That will mean under some circumstances that a point of order may be brought which has to do with debate which occurred on the previous day after the opportunity's been there to review the content of *Hansard*.

However, as the hon. member for North Battleford has pointed out, the remarks that he raises and brings in his point of order were . . . he makes reference to *Hansard* of two days ago, April 15, and for that reason I must find that the point of order is not well taken.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Speaker, in as much as I am the subject of the point of order, I'd just like to say that if I have given offence to members opposite, I sincerely apologize. The remarks weren't intended in that spirit. And if offence has been taken, I apologize for that. It wasn't intended.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair wishes to acknowledge the remarks that the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland who, as he correctly points out, although not required to do so by ruling of the Chair, has voluntarily expressed his apology. And that is acknowledged and appreciated by the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 24 — The Court Jurisdiction and Proceedings Transfer Act/Loi sur la compétence des tribunaux et le renvoi des instances

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to have with me today, Darcy McGovern from legislative services.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, if I may ask the hon. minister . . . of course the question of jurisdiction and transfer of proceedings is one which has been largely covered by the common law and the rules of court, and ordinarily when parliament legislates in an area of the law, a technical area of

the law such as this, which has been handled hitherto by the common law, it is usually because there is some problem that the common law has not addressed.

And if I may ask the minister, what are the problems with common law procedure that has caused the government to think that it is now necessary to intervene? How does this Act change the common law? How will the procedure be different than the common law? What are the difficulties and the problems which have given rise to the necessity for this legislation?

If I may continue — I see the minister is consulting, and that's fine. I wish to thank his officials. I see that, for instance, one of the definitions contained in the Act is a real and substantial connection with Saskatchewan and with the facts on which the proceedings are based. And I'm just wondering like, how does that alter the common law? What is the problem with the common law? It seems to me that's simply a restating of the common law. Am I missing something here?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm pleased to try to answer the question. I think what happened is that the Morguard decision of the Supreme Court of Canada laid out some rules which were to be used right across the country. What then was recognized, that there were a number of different jurisdictional rules across the country that ended up causing problems in a number of different ways.

So basically, you know, if you look at what the intent or what the purpose of this Act is, it's to replace all of the different jurisdictional rules currently used in Canadian courts with a uniform set of standards that would be the same right across the country for determining jurisdiction. And it would basically . . . redoing these rules would coordinate all of the rules across the country to follow the principles set out in the common law by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Morguard decision. And also we would use this to complement The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act.

And also — and this is an important point — that we would provide a mechanism — and I think this goes maybe even more to the heart of your question — a mechanism whereby superior courts in Canada would be able to transfer litigation to a more appropriate forum.

And this is a power that's increasingly identified as a need because of the fact that often litigation relates to a number of jurisdictions. And the numbers of applications and the . . . also basically multiplicity of actions that may arise, means that for the common . . . or for the courts to sort it all out, ends up with quite a number of difficulties.

What we're doing here is trying to set out some rules which have been developed by extensive consultation with the federal government and all of the provincial and territorial governments, is you know, rules that will . . . we can all use to deal with these particular problems.

I think another example that you may recall, I think, from some of your legal studies way back a long time ago, like mine were, you know, relates to airplane traffic and exactly where is an

airplane when a lawsuit arises. If it's flying over Saskatchewan and there's a lawsuit that results from something happening on that airplane, does the Saskatchewan court have jurisdiction? Those kinds of questions.

What the legislation does do is set out rules which will eliminate a number of these strange little problems.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have intergovernmental cooperation in the form of a uniform legislation commission. I seem to interpret the minister's comments as saying that this is the fruits of that cooperation and that parallel legislation will be introduced in other legislatures and parliaments of this country.

I wonder if he could just explain if I'm correct on that and if in fact he anticipates say, parallel legislation being introduced in other legislatures.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to confirm this Bill comes out of the work of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada which, as you know, works all year round but meets every August usually to gather together the best information and ideas from all of the jurisdictions in Canada. And so this is legislation that has come forth from the Uniform Law Conference of Canada.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'm satisfied with that preamble, and I'm prepared to move into the clause-by-clause study unless my colleague from the third party has any opening comments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, not being a lawyer, I am not perhaps quite as familiar with some of the contexts and terms that are used in this particular piece of legislation.

But I'm wondering if . . . Under clause 8 of the Bill, it establishes residency requirements for unincorporated associations. Could you clarify this by giving us some example of such associations and how this clause would affect them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the examples are unincorporated groups within a community, and sometimes it could be you end up with a group of people coming together for a task that doesn't end up requiring them to incorporate a non-profit corporation, for example. I suppose it could be something like working towards a short-term building of a community hall or something like that. Normally, people would set up a non-profit corporation to do that, but sometimes they don't. And if that arises and those people are involved in litigation, then you would — and you were attempting to go after that group or they're in court in some way — then what you would do is you try to figure out, okay, where are the people who are involved in doing that particular work.

I think practically, if you would look at the legislation it would be 6 and 7 would be used much more often than 8, because any time there is litigation it usually involves individuals or corporations or partnerships and not unincorporated associations. But we end up having to have this in the

legislation in case there is a situation like that.

The way the definition goes here is that you would then look at who are the officers of this group or the people who are running the group, where do they live. Do they live in Saskatchewan? If it was a group that across the country . . . and all their activity was in Manitoba, for example, then practically the court here would use this legislation and say it makes more sense that the court in Brandon handle this, and if the court in Brandon agreed that made sense, well then the whole thing would be transferred.

(1500)

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if someone like a local branch of, say, the 4-H, the Nottingham 4-H Club, which is unincorporated — simply a group of children and some leaders . . . this is the kind of people that you would be talking about as unincorporated associations?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. In clause 9(e)(i), it states that contractual obligations fall under Saskatchewan's jurisdiction if, and I quote:

“ . . . obligations were to be performed, to a substantial extent, in Saskatchewan;”

Well what does that mean — what is a substantial extent and how broad or how narrow is that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that's a question that a judge would decide in each particular case. But an example could be if there was a contract that was entered into which involved perhaps transporting — just using an example off the top of my head here — but transporting some people from Manitoba to British Columbia and they went through Saskatchewan.

Well the contract itself about that transportation probably would have as its place where it would be disputed, in Manitoba or Vancouver, if that's where the parties were — not Saskatchewan. Even though some things that have been done in the contract, like driving through on the Trans-Canada Highway, are done in Saskatchewan, you wouldn't fight over that contract in a Saskatchewan court.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Under section 12, I'm not clear on where it spells out the terms under which another court can transfer cases to Saskatchewan or vice versa. My concern here is, is there any danger of another jurisdiction unloading a number of its cases on Saskatchewan's courts to clear backlogs within their own province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to your question is in section 15 which sets out our court's discretion to accept or refuse a transfer. And practically, this transfer of a proceeding would not take place unless our court in Saskatchewan would agree to accept it. And then it sets out in section 15 what are the requirements before the court would accept it.

And first off obviously is that the court here thinks that they have the appropriate territorial competence in this proceeding and they also have the subject matter competence; they're able to deal with the subject matter. Also there is the clear power in here for our court to refuse to accept the transfer if it considers it just that the matter should not come here.

So I think that's quite a few protections to protect us from dumping of cases from another jurisdiction.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 9

Mr. Hillson: — I think this spills over to clause 10 too, but I think it's the same point I would like to put to the minister, if I may, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I throw this out as a question rather than a comment, but is there any concern in the Department of Justice that when we have large national cases that have particular ramifications for our province, that we may be faced with large corporations and large law firms who are more interested in having their cases heard in say, Toronto or Ottawa or Vancouver or Calgary?

And if I may just put this to the minister, my recollection is that over potash prorationing, that there was such a situation of a very large litigation involving national and international companies and national law firms who frankly may have preferred to have heard it somewhere other than Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

And is there any concern that this legislation may lead to a situation where there is a very major litigation involving large international corporations, that even though it has particular relevance to Saskatchewan, that they might prefer to have this matter heard in Toronto rather than in the courts of rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well what I would say is that this question has been discussed and raised and I think discussed at great length in the uniform law conference itself. But practically, we know that when there's a real and substantial connection with Saskatchewan, our courts are very keen on having the matter dealt with here in Saskatchewan.

I think part of your question maybe relates to some of those kinds of litigation which involve quite a number of provinces. And it could be something that relates to, perhaps, industries right across the country — every province has an industry. And would this in fact then allow for decisions to be made in another province or another place?

(1515)

I think there are two sides to that. One of them is the actual organization of the case, which may make sense, such as we sometimes do now in the large class action suits. And one that we dealt with quite extensively in last session of this legislature related to the breast implants, where most of our Saskatchewan

litigants were working through a case in the British Columbia court because that made sense practically and jurisdictionally.

We think that this legislation allows the tools for the courts and for the litigants to make the most appropriate decision about where a case would be. We do not see it as, in any way, eliminating the possibility that a matter set in Saskatchewan, like the potash case that you talked about related to Saskatchewan assets and to Saskatchewan policies, we don't see how that would ever be dealt with in another province.

Mr. Hillson: — I thank the minister for those comments. And I can see that perhaps in the case of potash prorationing there was obviously a particular connection to this province. But is there any concern, as you said with the breast implant case, that where in effect the case could go to any province in Canada when you have a lot of international corporations and national law firms? It's kind of hard to imagine that they are likely to pick Saskatchewan as their venue of choice.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I guess all I would say is that I know very many able and good counsel in Saskatchewan who I think firms would actually come here to have cases dealt with if they could choose jurisdiction.

I think the key point to remember is, as you said on section 10, where you look at the . . . Sort of one of the main objects of this legislation is to look at the comparative convenience and expense for all of the parties in a proceeding. And I think practically, we have much faith in our judges to be able to discern this and make sure that the appropriate jurisdiction is selected in dealing with that.

But I think also there are questions like you raise where we can't predict every case that would show up.

But practically, if we end up being able to deal with litigation and all the parties agree that the contract could be dealt with here, because we can get a matter to court in six months as opposed to three or four years in some other part of Canada, who knows, it may be a place where our lawyers can provide some leadership in the country and solve problems that way.

Mr. Hillson: — It does strike me though, Mr. Minister, that in class actions or quasi-class actions, and I suppose perhaps tainted blood would be another current example, we in Saskatchewan surely will always be caught by the factor that there will be more people affected in say Toronto than in Saskatchewan. And from what you have said and from my reading of the Bill, that alone would be a strong argument for saying that Toronto should be preferred over, say Regina, because obviously the number of affected litigants will be much higher in central Canada than here.

Well you have to accept the fairness of the argument that, say again in the case of tainted blood, there would simply be more people resident near Toronto than near Regina. On the other hand, that will presumably impose some additional cost and burden on the Saskatchewan litigants who in most cases will be the ones to have to travel because they will be in the minority.

And I'm wondering if the minister could indicate, in hardship cases such as these where our people will probably have to go out of province, would the department consider any form of assistance for those hardship cases who, because of this legislation, would probably not have their case heard in this province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think I can answer the first question and say that we wouldn't have any plans at this point to set up a budget of that kind.

I think what I would also say is that under the present system, without this legislation, probably the kind of things that we talk about would be involved in litigation both in Saskatchewan and in the other province. And so instead of . . . you'd end up with two lawsuits that the person would participate in. And so that's one of the issues that we're getting at here, is to have . . . and I guess that basically the other piece of legislation, the Canadian judgments Act, relates to the transportability of judgements that one gets in another province.

But I think practically, what we're attempting to do here is look at the comparative convenience and expense of the parties. And there may be some situations like you identify where they may require somebody to go some . . . another place for the litigation. But I think at the present time, we have a system where they probably would end up having to litigate and be involved in litigation in both places.

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

Mr. Flavel: — Mr. Chair, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the members for allowing me to take this time. I want to introduce to the members of the Legislative Assembly someone that I didn't recognize the name when I see the card. He was a constituency president for my riding of Last Mountain-Touchwood when I was a candidate, before I was elected; Moved from there to Unity, to be a teacher in Unity, Saskatchewan; and moved from there to the Yukon to become a member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and won the government, on the government's side.

I want to introduce to you, Doug Livingston, the member of the Legislative Assembly from the Yukon, and I want to, while I'm on my feet, ask him to say a big welcome and a hello to his wife Lou, and Jonathon, Ken, Andrea, and Greg.

And we look forward to seeing them back in Saskatchewan when your job is completed up there, if it's ever completed. But best wishes on your term as a legislator in the Yukon and congratulations and welcome to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Pringle: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, can I have leave?

The Chair: — Actually the Chair reports to committee members. My confusion is the hon. member is sitting on the opposition side, which doesn't pose a problem, but I neglected to ask if the member has leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the members. I would like to also say hi to Doug.

I don't know Doug, but we spent two years in the Yukon in Mayo, which you would know well. And so to me that seems like . . . in many ways the Yukon seems like home. Our hearts are still there in many ways, although we love Saskatchewan.

But when you're back there, say hi to people in Mayo, and we still keep in touch with many of them. So, good to see you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Murrell: — For leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you. I too would like to welcome Doug. He was also involved very heavily with the Wilkie constituency in the 1990s and we miss him a lot and his leadership. And we hope that he and Lou are enjoying their new home. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 24 (continued)

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11 agreed to.

The Chair: — Committee members, in the interest of time, part III, which contains clauses 12 through 23, if there are no objections, I'll . . .

Mr. Hillson: — I have no objection dealing with the part as a whole but I do have an amendment relating to clause 12, Mr. Deputy Chair.

The Chair: — Since there are amendments, or at least one amendment, we'll deal clause by clause.

Clause 12

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Relative to my previous comments, it does seem to me that, as I say, in class or quasi-class actions, the reality is that just because of our lower numbers compared to say central Canada or Vancouver, that more often our litigants will have to go out of the province than the other way around. And the breast implant case referred to by the Minister of Justice, the tainted blood case referred to by myself, are examples where we may well have hardship cases who will have to go out of Saskatchewan and this will create extra burdens on them and extra expense for them.

And while I accept that the sheer weight of numbers and inconvenience would dictate that they would go out of province, I say we have to accept that's probably what's going to happen in the majority of cases. And I would ask if the Minister of Justice would consider sub-clause (5) to be added, to read as follows, that:

(5) The minister may make provision for payment of expenses for hardship cases whose litigation is transferred to another jurisdiction.

In the wording I have suggested here, discretionary and not mandatory, as I don't think it's something that should maybe be done automatically in all cases. But I think there should be some discretionary cases to look after hardship litigants in Saskatchewan who will find that their litigation, their case, has been sent to, say Toronto or Vancouver.

The Chair: — Why is the Government Whip on his feet?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of members of the Assembly, in the interest of doing business in a manner a little more comfortable in the House because it is rather stuffy in here at this moment, whether we members would provide leave to go to a more casual form of dress until Mr. Speaker arrives. And that way it would be a little easier for us to get through the business without sweating quite as much.

(1530)

The Chair: — The Government Whip has requested leave to entertain a more casual, i.e. jacketless, method of conducting business, it being as stuffy as it is today in this Chamber, until Mr. Speaker returns. Does the Government Whip have leave? That being agreed . . . that not being agreed.

Why is the member for Regina Victoria on his feet?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chair, I just speak to the point of order. I would have some concerns that although this is something that would be of direct benefit to the male members of the Legislative Assembly, the female members of the Legislative Assembly will not be benefited by this action any way whatsoever.

The Chair: — There not having been a point of order, members of the committee having agreed to a more casual

attire; that is understood until the return of Mr. Speaker.

Why is the member for North Battleford on his feet?

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I was going to speak, just briefly, to the amendment that I had just proposed.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I was going to say regarding the amendment I have just proposed, that I would take no objection to proceeding on to consideration of other clauses, to come back to this one, if the Minister of Justice wishes some time to review my amendment to see if it is acceptable to the government.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of problems with the motion. The first problem is that there already is a subclause (5) in existence, so that causes some problem with the motion. The second one, I think our position . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Perhaps we're getting ahead of ourselves, committee members. I thank the hon. member for North Battleford for the motion which we are currently reviewing to make certain said motion is in order.

And we have the minister starting to respond to the motion, which has not been ruled in or out of order at this stage. So I apologize to the minister for cutting him off at that stage, but we're just prematurely dealing with something.

The next order is for the Chair to decide whether this motion is in order in its entirety or in some part. That will take some moments.

Order. I again thank the member for North Battleford for the amendment. On reviewing the amendment to clause 12, the amendment is out of order. And I refer members to the rule book, section 36: "Money" motion: message to precede. And I read in part from rule 36:

Any vote, resolution, address or bill introduced in the Assembly for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue . . . (later) . . . or to impose any new or additional charge upon the public revenue or upon the people, or to release or compound any sum of money due to the Crown, or to grant any property of the Crown, or to authorize any loan or any charge upon the credit of the Province, shall be recommended to the Assembly by Message of the Lieutenant Governor before it is considered by the Assembly.

Therefore, this amendment is out of order.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I of course accept the ruling of the Chair, but I none the less rise to invite the Minister of Justice none the less to consider my proposed amendment.

We know that on the federal level we have the special assistance program for needy litigants, which is outside of the legal aid provision, in order that people bringing special legal

actions that would require resources beyond the means of the litigants, through LEAF (women's legal and education action fund) and organizations such as that, receive special funding.

My concern is that quasi-class actions that have national interest will rarely come into this province. They will typically leave this province because we will almost of necessity have a lower number of litigants involved than will the other more populace provinces.

And I would ask the minister to consider whether in cases such as breast implant, tainted blood, and other such situations as that where we have very needy people involved in serious litigation, if the government would not consider some special assistance to those people who will in all likelihood find that their jurisdiction moves to, say Toronto.

And I would invite the minister to consider the possibility of that amendment, and I would point out again that my proposed amendment was discretionary rather than mandatory.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well my response on the discussion is that this is uniform legislation which is intended to be introduced right across Canada, and so I would not be in favour of that particular amendment. That's not to count out the possibility that there are some other places, or some other times, where that particular issue may be dealt with.

I think practically, we also know from the second reading speech that I gave on this legislation that we will not be proclaiming this legislation until a number of other jurisdictions have also enacted the legislation. And that may be a number of years down the road.

So practically, I guess what I would say is that we do not wish to proceed with that type of proposal that you've made and we wish to proceed with the uniform legislation that's come from the uniform law conference.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, I accept again the minister's comments in good faith. And I would however still ask that the suggestion not be totally lost sight of, but I would request that it be made note of as being an appropriate suggestion that may in some other form, in some other venue, be acted upon.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think I can say with all honesty that we listen carefully to all of the things that the member from . . . or all of the members in the opposition raise because there often are good ideas. And we will include this question about funding litigants that are in some way disadvantaged. And when an appropriate situation arises, we can see if we can include some provision for that.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 21 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 22

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair. There are two things I

note here as I read this. First of all, if a case is transferred into this province from another jurisdiction, then even if it is beyond the limitation period in this province, it would still go ahead and be determined in Saskatchewan if it is still within the limitation period of the transferring province. And I do have some comments on that. I would just ask the Minister of Justice to confirm if that is a correct interpretation of the effect of this clause.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I think if you have the condition which is set out in section 21(1)(b) which says that:

. . . the transferring court had both territorial and subject-matter competence in the proceeding.

Mr. Hillson: — My problem here that I would like to put to the minister is that if litigation transferred into Saskatchewan then is successful that would be statute barred in Saskatchewan, this would be a rather anomalous position if the litigation commenced here and the plaintiff was told, I'm sorry, you're out of time, therefore you're out of court. And yet if the litigation started in another province, say in Alberta where it's not barred by a limitation period, it's then transferred in and proceeds and the plaintiff is successful, that strikes me as quite an anomaly and something that would strike the average person as somewhat peculiar.

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the answer to your question is that there may be circumstances where the litigation could have continued in the jurisdiction where it started. And as you will note, as I set out the condition, it has both territorial and subject matter competence in the transferring court; so practically, the litigation could have continued in Alberta, for example, and been completed there.

What may happen though, if you use section 10, is that it may make more sense for the convenience of the parties who may be Saskatchewan litigants, for example, that the whole case be dealt with in Saskatchewan. And obviously the litigants would have applied to do that and it would be at the request of some of the litigants.

So practically, if the matter wasn't transferred to Saskatchewan, the whole case would just be held in the other province or territory where it was being transferred from.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the minister still appears to be saying that there may be cases over a car accident, medical malpractice, libel and slander, where people could be . . . litigants could be outside of limitation periods in our legislation, could still be successful in the courts of Saskatchewan if they had been transferred in.

I find that an anomaly if that could in fact happen under this Act. And I must say, I think most citizens would consider that to be a peculiar outcome.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm not quite certain what kind of an example that you could use that would fit with your

hypothetical case. Practically, if a matter is for example in Alberta and those courts have both the territorial and the subject matter competence to proceed with the matter, and then they transfer it to a Saskatchewan court and the Saskatchewan court thinks it's appropriate to proceed with the matter, then you're dealing with a matter that's continuing anyway. And as I said before, it could be just completed in Alberta if there was a problem.

Now I know one of the other issues that's being dealt with at the uniform law conference, and this may be more what your question is, is if there are differences in limitation periods between provinces as it relates to specific issues, and somebody gets an ability to start a lawsuit in another province even after it's been stopped in Saskatchewan.

I guess I'm having a little bit of a hard time figuring out a kind of case where a Saskatchewan court has the territorial and subject matter competence and the Alberta court also has both of those things, or some other province or territory has both of those things, which would then create the problem that you're talking about.

But I think the answer to your other question is that there is a willingness to discuss and attempt to set common limitation periods across the country.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, that was my next question. Will the uniform law conference then try and do some work so that we will have standard limitation of actions throughout Canada, of course depending obviously on their adoption by our various legislatures.

But it does strike me, and again if we go back to the cases we were talking about a few minutes ago, cases in which there are probably some Canadians affected in every province . . . So basically from a legal standpoint, you could probably go to any jurisdiction in Canada and hear them. Then it becomes, I think, somewhat of a problem that the action might be statute-barred in one province and not in another.

And that's what I see in section 22; that because of various limitation periods, one of the factors then in litigants looking around would be exactly where they're still within the limitation period and where they would be out. But as I said, we've already been discussing this afternoon some cases which, as I understand it, could basically be brought in any province of Canada.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to your question would be what we had talked about previously where our courts in Saskatchewan have the ability to identify a particular litigant that may be forum shopping, and that may be, for example, a just reason to refuse a transfer of a case from another province to Saskatchewan. And so then practically, if it could be dealt with in Alberta under their rules, even if it was more convenient and for many other reasons, the court may say, well no, we're not going to let that matter be dealt with in Saskatchewan because it's offensive to Saskatchewan residents for just the reasons that you've stated.

Clause 22 agreed to.

Clauses 23 to 25 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would like to thank the officials . . . or my official today, Darcy McGovern from legislative services.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I would just like to thank the minister and his official for coming in today and for answering our questions.

Mr. Hillson: — I too would like to thank the minister and his assistant this afternoon for their assistance in answering questions and presenting the legislation.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 24 — The Court Jurisdiction and Proceedings Transfer Act/ Loi sur la compétence des tribunaux et le renvoi des instances

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Education Vote 5

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much. To my left is Craig Dotson, deputy minister. To my right is Michael Littlewood, director of third party funding and legislative services. Directly behind me is Ken Horsman, assistant deputy minister, and to Mr. Horsman's left is Mae Boa, executive director of finance and operations. Also in attendance is Karen Lautsch, manager of school grants; John McLaughlin, executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission; and Cal Kirby, the director of facilities planning.

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the minister welcome, of course, and to the officials . . .

An Hon. Member: — Ask for her resignation now and save you doing it later.

(1600)

Mr. Krawetz: — We'll start again. We appreciate the fact that

we have an opportunity to, I think, bring to the attention of not only the Assembly and the opposition, the various changes that have occurred in the K to 12 system, the kinds of new ideas and new things that have been developed over the year. Those are very important, those are very important for the people of Saskatchewan to understand.

So I think we'd like to use the opportunity that we have today, in terms of the time that has been allotted to us, to clarify some things about the K to 12 system, in terms of where we have been over the last couple of years, in terms of the fact that we had two departments together and now we're working under one department with this minister. And of course we want to get some understanding about some of the things that as an opposition member I require in terms of getting a better understanding of the kinds of changes that we have made.

And, Madam Minister, I guess the first request that I would ask of you is if you could have . . . and maybe your officials have that material with them today. What I'd like to have in terms of some of the latest announcements — we've had a lot of discussion around assessment and reassessment and those kinds of things — whether or not there is a printout available that would indicate the assessments of each school division in total and that we could then establish what the total provincial assessment would be? If that's available, I would appreciate that.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can get that information to the member.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. The second thing I guess, in terms of saving some time later on as well, is to ask that the employees that are employed by the Department of Education, if I could have a printout in terms of the people that are employed. Okay.

And the third thing that I would request, if you could make a comment on that as well, would be the latest undertaking by your department, of course, is in the area of grant distributions and the new grant formula. I've been hearing by way of telephone calls and by way of some mail-outs . . . mail-ins to me, that boards of education have received their information. What I'd like to know, if you could supply the entire provincial picture. And what I'm asking for, not only is, you know, the final total in terms of saying that we have a grant formula that distributes a certain amount of money, but also in terms of what changes and what amounts of money were distributed in each of the areas of recognition of students, in the area of special ed, in the area of transportation, those kinds of things. Are those figures available?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We can send the member the grant for each school board. I'm not sure that it would be possible for us to send him all of the different information for each of the school divisions by various factors. But certainly we can give him the information in terms of the grant.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm actually just looking for the provincial picture for those areas. Okay?

As I began my remarks this afternoon, Madam Minister, I indicated that we've had a chance to look at two departments in action, and I'm referring to Post-Secondary and Education.

And I think you've had an opportunity to look at one complete year with just K to 12 actually working out of the department. And I'd ask you to make comments in terms of how you see the K to 12 system functioning now in terms of some of the new ventures that you're undertaking, and how it has changed over the last year, if indeed it has.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think what's fair to say is that given all of the changes that were coming federally, particularly in the training piece that the Minister for Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training released yesterday, the division of the department and the creation of two ministers — one responsible for K to 12; one responsible for Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training — has meant that one minister, Post-Secondary and Skills Training, could focus on the training piece, particularly when we have seen a significant reduction of federal funding as it pertains to skills training in the province over the next three years. So the minister has been able to focus on that piece.

I have been able to focus on the K to 12 system and some of the issues that we're facing in K to 12, particularly assessment and the implications for school boards across the province; particularly the implementation or the continued implementation of our core curriculum; particularly the discussion that went on in this province for over six months regarding restructuring of school divisions. And now we will be having a further discussion this spring in terms of the notion of what school councils might mean for the province of Saskatchewan.

So I think it's fair to say that when I was the minister responsible for both envelopes, it was . . . we had a wide array of issues, and issues that were on the burner, so to speak. They were there in front of us. And with the division of the ministry into K to 12 and post-secondary, we have two ministers that can focus in on the issues that are before the public in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, last year at this time you indicated to me the structures that you have in place in terms of the executive directors of the various departments. Has there been significant changes in the area of executive director?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There have been no changes.

Mr. Krawetz: — In terms of the departmental officials, I note that there are different people here representing, for instance, the grant areas. I note last year that Mr. Sing Chin was here and now you have some . . . And I apologize for missing the name. Have there been some changes in the area of grants?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Sing Chin is on leave; he has been on leave of absence since the beginning of September. I believe he's on a one-year leave of absence. And Ms. Lautsch is in an acting position.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for providing that name again to me. In terms of the administration costs, and we've had some discussion last year when we were nearing . . . or taking a look at how creation of a post-secondary department would alleviate some of the financial pressures on the system that was operating, can you indicate . . . will you be able to supply the figures, in terms of the administrative costs of the Department of Ed for last year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, we'll send that information to the member.

Mr. Krawetz: — I note that in terms of looking at the number of employees — and you have indicated that you will be supplying of course the names of those employees — that the number of employees within what was Education, Training and Employment, the old department that was responsible for both, and the Education portion, now responsible for K to 12, hasn't changed significantly. Are you still sharing employees? Are there people that will be doing a lot more than just the K to 12 work?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, we're still sharing admin services, capital, multi-media, and human resources. So we're still sharing those four areas.

Mr. Krawetz: — Into which category, as far as the estimates, do the costs of regional offices fall, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The regional directors come under regional services as contained on page 43 of the budget *Estimates* book.

Mr. Krawetz: — Let's just not deal with the numbers in the *Estimates* book but let's just look at the regional services that are provided by the regional offices. I recall in Education then, of course we've had a time when I was involved, there were fewer regional offices, then there were more, and now there are fewer.

What role do the regional offices play in terms of delivering education in the province? And I guess your comments about whether or not you are satisfied with the role, and whether you see some changes that may be necessary in terms of the role. I know you made some comments about restructuring and how the regional directors have played a role. What stand do you have on the regional offices?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well the regional offices in this province provide support to school divisions across the province. They really are the department's eyes and ears in terms of the field and what is happening in the field. The regional directors and the support people in the regional offices are able to give feedback on various public policy issues. They certainly provide input into policy direction in this province.

I think it's fair to say that as minister, I'm extremely appreciative of the work that the regional directors provide to the system. I'm extremely appreciative of the fact that they are located in the regions. And they certainly bring a regional perspective to public policy, which I think is extremely

important.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I've never known how or what procedure is followed in terms of the selecting of a regional director. Is it an open competition or are their appointments strictly by the minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, we have a process where people apply for the job through public advertising. And the decisions are made in consultation with the human resource people in the department, along with Ernie Cychmistruk, who is in charge of the regional services operation in the province, along with the deputy and the ADM (assistant deputy minister).

I think it's fair to say that as minister I have never — and I want to repeat, never — involved myself in who should be hired in the Department of Education, and I have taken that position because I was a former civil servant and did not like the politicization of the civil service when I worked for the civil service. I thought people should be there based on skill and competence and I've made it my priority not to interfere in who is hired in terms of the Department of Education.

Mr. Krawetz: — It is warm in here, Madam Minister.

When you talk about the role of regional directors in the restructuring plan — and you have indicated before in this House that regional directors were directly involved in terms of the process and meetings — do you think that the role that they played in terms of the consultative process that was followed throughout the meetings has jeopardized their position in terms of what may happen in the future? And I'm talking about the immediate future, maybe a year or two.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. We'll turn that one in a short while.

Could you bring to the attention of, of course the House and all the people that will be interested in that — and I know you've made some comments here about the consultative process — the number of meetings, the cost of those meetings, the fact that you had presented a discussion paper that included four options; are you satisfied with that whole process and the outcome that you have described? Where are we at now with that whole process?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We had 95 public consultation meetings between May and October 1996. Over 5,500 people attended. We had over 1,100 written responses. We had over 500 people visit our web site. I can tell you that I met with dozens of stakeholder groups and other key organizations.

In terms of the process, I think it was, from the government's point of view, the most outstanding consultation process that we've had in terms of public participation. People did come to the meetings. From the government's point of view, it was led by the regional directors out in the regions who know the trustees, the teachers, the parents, the support staff. They certainly were there as the eyes and ears of the department.

As well, each regional director presented a report at the end of each meeting, so I knew as minister exactly what was happening at those meetings. I knew how many people attended, whether they were trustees, parents, teachers, support staff, and so on.

(1615)

Now I would say in terms of the paper . . . the initial consultation paper, it was short because we wanted to make sure that people read it. One of my disappointments I think, if we want to call it that, is I don't think that we put enough information into the notion of school councils. And that created some concern certainly for teachers and also for district boards of education at the local school level. They didn't know what it meant. And at the end of the day we decided that we needed to have more discussion on the notion of school councils.

And it's our intention to release a public discussion paper outlining the department's view of what school councils should look like in the province of Saskatchewan. And it's our intention to do that later this spring so that we can have further consultations with parents and community members and trustees and teachers to sort of really examine this concept that seems to be sweeping the nation, with the whole idea of getting more parent involvement in our schools, along with community involvement.

Mr. Krawetz: — You indicated, Madam Minister, that at each of the meetings there was a tally kept of the numbers attending and of course what sector they represented.

I'd be interested to know if you have a number of the non-teachers, the non-board members, you know, the non-departmental officials. When you use a number of nearly 6,000 people that attended — and I know I was at a few of the meetings and there were numbers of teachers and there were a number of board members, etc. — what number can you look at in terms of a percentage of the total that might have been that group that we would call the parent or the outsider, out of the system?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't have the number here, but it was over half — over half the people that attended. The largest public consultation in the province since we came to government were people who were not, quote, "the stakeholders, the partner groups." They were people who were interested in the future of public education in the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — When you proposed the four options, did you expect a different outcome from the public?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure what the outcome was going to be. I mean, it's no secret that I have my own preferred option. I like the notion of a K to 12 system in the province. I think some day we'll get there, but I may be old and very grey.

What did I think was going to happen? I wasn't sure. I had some thinking in terms of what would happen in different regions of the province. I thought that there were certain

regions of the province that would just say, leave us alone. I thought that there were other regions of the province that are ready for change and would call for change. So it was an interesting discussion.

And what I found most interesting about the whole process is that people are prepared for change. They want change, they understand change, but they want to be in control of it — but they also want some government leadership. And I guess I wasn't quite sure how that was going to work out. But at the end of the day it was pretty clear people aren't opposed to change. They realize that change is inevitable. They want to determine that change. But they also want some direction and leadership from the province so that we don't have a mishmash public education system.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for those comments. And I guess your position taken was that there will be change, it will be voluntary. And we've had well basically nearly a half a year go by already. Are you satisfied with the reaction of boards of education, with the reaction of the public? And I know we've discussed in this House where you've made mention of the Blaine Lake School Division, but yet there are others that I'm hearing about.

So I'm wondering, are you pleased, are you satisfied? Or are there going to be some other directions that you'll be taking in your department, officials will be taking?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I'm extremely pleased and somewhat surprised actually at the level of discussion and activity that's going on in the province. Yes we have the Blaine Lake restructuring that happened, but there are many, many school divisions across the province that are in the process of restructuring. And it's possible that by next fall we may have some larger boards that will elect trustees on their larger boundaries.

Mr. Krawetz: — I think I would support your comment there that we're going to have larger boards. My concern — and I've had a couple of concerns raised to me by telephone — is that where there seemed to be a desire to move forward, there was a desire to start to talk to a neighbour, that indeed there has been a reaction by, in one instance, teachers who have said no, we're not looking at that.

And another reaction where there was some discussion by both boards, and it was ongoing already and it's been ongoing for a long period of time, where we've had reactions now by communities — if not necessarily the entire division, but communities within a division — who said, well just a minute here now, we may be losing the perceived autonomy that they have at that community level or the fact that the decision-making capacity that is occurring at that school division may be shifting now to another community of course, that is not in that existing school division. And there seems to be some, there seems to be a tidal wave that I'm just seeing the very beginnings of.

And I wonder if you've had those same comments and those same letters to ensure that indeed that we're not, as a

department and as a thought that you've had in terms of voluntary amalgamations, so we don't suddenly have a tidal wave that knocks everything over in two months time.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, I don't feel, in any sense of the word, a tidal wave of anti-discussion reaction. I really don't. What I do see is a concern on the part of some people as you say that they may not have as much representation as they had in the past. And that's why we're going to have to be very careful in terms of the subdivision boundaries, particularly in rural areas.

But I should share with you that there are parts of the province where people within that school division are asking for subdivision boundary changes based on population, where the population may be in one area and they only have one representative, and there's not very much population in another area and they have the same representation even though they have fewer students. And so there are more . . . I hear more concerns about the latter point I make than the point that you make.

Mr. Krawetz: — I'm hearing the same concerns, Madam Minister. But the concerns that I have had raised to me about people wanting to redesign a school division are not necessarily . . . the fact is that maybe they see it as a way of keeping a school open.

And what we're looking at is now the larger community which does have more population. And I wonder about assessment now that we've had some changes in terms of rural assessment and urban assessment. Population does have control of that in terms of how we distribute the voters in a school division. The concern that I'm hearing is yes, they want to refocus and they want to look at the division and maybe realign it.

The people that are objecting to that of course are the trustees or the ratepayers of a subdivision where there is a small school that they fear will be closed. So you know it relates, I think, one to the other.

The other concern that I have is — and I've had this one raised many a time — as two school divisions or maybe even three as in the case of Prince Albert area, as they move together and become an amalgamated school division, if that happens, what procedure will you have in place to address those . . . and I refer to them as sort of fringe areas on the outside of a school division where the boundary was struck, I believe, 1944 or whenever it was, and trading patterns, demographics have changed, and in fact school divisions have released students from an existing school division, how will you address that new boundary if it's done in isolated areas in the province?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It will be done on a case-by-case basis. And we know of, you know, some people that are requesting that their assessment, their land mass, go with a particular school division should something take place. And obviously in the past what we've tried to do is have agreement between the various school divisions. And I anticipate that we will continue to have school divisions working out a process where assessment may go one way and assessment the other way, but

it will be through mutual consent. And if that doesn't work, obviously we have the Jack Lloyd Boundaries Commission that deals with boundary issues if school boards can't work things out on their own.

Mr. Krawetz: — If we're moving forward with voluntary amalgamations, what will happen to the poor school division that nobody wants and in a couple of years, due to declining enrolments, they have a problem? How will your department handle that?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well all of the restructuring initiatives require ministerial approval. And I can assure the minister of this, that I am not going to allow doughnut hole-ing or people getting together and not wanting to join with the poor country cousin. We're not going to allow that to happen.

So we want to ensure the principles behind public education in the province and that is, you know, equity in education — that regardless of where you live you have access to a similar type of education in the province, similar quality of education. And we're not going to allow restructuring to undermine those fundamental principles, I think, which are the principles of the people of this province.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, I refer you to last year's budget. And just a quick quote here from the statement made by the Finance minister, who said: "We will work with our partners in education to achieve savings of \$7 million annually in 1998-99." That's a quotation. Okay. Could you tell me and the people in Saskatchewan what was intended with that remark?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I think one of the things that we were facing last year was federal funding reductions in terms of transfer payments, CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer), as well as changes to training. I believe \$37 million was coming out of the province in terms of money that was going in to train individuals.

And we were facing a position last year, given the information we had from Ottawa and given prospects for the future, that the two universities would be facing funding reductions of some \$5 million for this year and the year after; and that school divisions at the end of the day, given teacher salary increases, would be facing a \$900,000 increase. But in essence, that was a funding reduction with a further funding reduction in '98-99.

Now things have gotten a little better for the province. In this budget we were able to announce a funding increase for K to 12, \$8 million. We announced that the universities would not receive a funding reduction in '97 or '98. We announced a training strategy which puts many millions of dollars more into the system — money that the federal government withdrew.

And we've also announced a training strategy yesterday that shows that at the end of the century, we'll have 10,000 more people that are trained than had the federal government left their system in place.

So I guess what's changed is the economy has improved. We

have access to more revenue. And at the end of the day we were able to announce what I consider to be a pretty good budget, and so do the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Krawetz: — I guess I'd like to make two points, Madam Minister. While you've described the post-secondary situation, I'm sure I'll hear the exact same comments about the changes made to the post-secondary areas from the Post-Secondary minister.

Secondly, the monies that the province receives federally do not come for the K to 12 system, okay. So what we have to look at is the K to 12 system, and I wonder about the comments of having to have savings of 7 to \$8 million. Was there an intention that indeed there were going to be amalgamations and that's the kind of money that would have been saved?

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No, it was basically an announcement of the budget — funding reduction to K to 12.

And I just want to make this point that it's true that the federal government does not have constitutional jurisdiction over K to 12. That's under the auspices of the province. The federal government, though, does have some involvement in health and post-secondary education in this country.

When they decide to reduce transfer payments to the province, a province like ours that was facing some pretty grim financial outlooks, and when the province decides that we need to back-fill our health system, which we did last year and which we were intending to do this year, and that we were going to back-fill the post-secondary education cuts last year, which we did, but we couldn't back-fill them in 1998, then as the government you go looking for money to back-fill health, which I think your party was raising a lot of concern about, even though there were cuts from Ottawa to the province to pay for health. And so at the end of the day we said some things in the budget document, the budget speech last year based on the information that we had — the financial outlook for the province.

But it's a year later. One year has passed. This province I think is no longer on equalization payments. We're no longer on social assistance from Ottawa. Things are getting a lot better. People are actually feeling a lot more optimistic about the future; we agree with them. And our budget was able to contain some more debt reduction, some tax reduction, and some funding increases to our most important areas — health, education, and social programs.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. While we know that everyone in this province, not only your department and all the people connected to your department, but I think all the residents of Saskatchewan look forward to the day when we'll be called a have-province and not a have-not. And we are now.

And as a result of the fact that we have additional revenues coming into our coffers, and those were anticipated in 1996 as well as this year, we knew that we have done much better. In

fact we have nearly a billion dollars more in terms of tax revenue now than what we had in 1991. So those kinds of things were known by the Finance minister.

When the initial discussion began on reorganization and the thought that there would be a certain number of school divisions . . . and I recall the minister making comments throughout the province that a system of maybe 35 or 40. And I think, if I recall, you said that it really wouldn't matter on the number, but if there was a need to amalgamate and there was a need to derive a new system, that there would be some savings. Some significant savings, I think were the words. Okay.

What kind of numbers then would you view as savings?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Just with all due respect to my colleague, I have never said that there were savings that would go to the provincial treasury. What I have said is that there could be redirects to go to students.

So just so we're very clear. At no time has this government ever said that reorganization of school divisions would lead to more money for the provincial treasury. What we have said is that restructuring could lead, would lead to more services for kids.

Mr. Krawetz: — I agree with you, Madam Minister. And I recall the comment that you said that if there were savings to be achieved that those would remain in the hands of boards of education.

However, when I look at the comments of the Finance minister that says we need to attain \$7 million worth of savings, and on the other side there are amalgamations that take place, would you not be just balancing the ledger?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No. No. No. No. And no means no. Last year, as I've said, we had some difficult circumstances. We had federal funding reductions to health and post-secondary education, the CHST, Canada Health and Social Transfer, of \$106 million. Our government last year back-filled every dime — \$106 million.

We couldn't, given what we knew last year, back-fill the further \$90 million that was coming in '97-98, so we had to go looking for some money. What we said in last year's budget was that we would work with our school partners to deal with that \$7 million funding reduction. And there were several ways to deal with it.

One of the ways to deal with it was maybe school boards don't get as much capital. That's one way to deal with it. Maybe school boards look at other ways of getting at that \$7 million funding reduction — not reorganization, but maybe there were some other things they could do.

What we said was we would work with our partners. Well at the end of the day we didn't have to work with our partners because we knew that the economy was starting to get better.

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker . . . or Mr. Chairperson, I think we put an extra \$40 million into the health system last summer

because the economy was getting better, the province was generating more revenue, and so on and so forth. So we didn't work with our partners because we knew that we would be in a position in this year's budget to announce, not a \$7 million funding reduction in 1997-98 but an \$8 million increase in 1997-98.

Mr. Krawetz: — Revenue sources for the province, Madam Minister, come from various different avenues. And as you've indicated, the source from the federal government of course was declining due to the changes in the equalization payments. And we're happy to report that indeed equalization payments are going to be down to almost nil and we'll not be relying on the federal government.

But there is a balance. There is a balance in terms of how well Saskatchewan does. If Saskatchewan as a province has other sources of revenue, in fact we do better and we achieve different sources of revenue. As a result, the federal government does not compensate us as well because we're now a have province.

So in terms of the monies that were spent on education last year and what were expected to be spent on education this year, if . . . Let's look at the scenario, Madam Minister, that would say what if you were right, what if you were right and had to implement last year's budget? How do you think you would have achieved \$7 million worth of savings?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well first of all what I want to explain to the member, there is a difference between equalization and CHST. Equalization is for provinces that are have-not provinces.

And what the federal government . . . As part of Canada, as part of being Canadians, not unlike our foundation operating grant, equalization means that if you are a have-not province, your economy is not doing well, you're are not able to raise as much revenue. But as a country we say that regardless of where you live in this country, you should have access to a similar health system or a similar education system or a similar post-secondary education system or a similar highway system or a similar you name it; that as Canadians we are all entitled regardless of where we live to have access to similar services — that's the notion of being Canadian.

And for provinces like Newfoundland, New Brunswick, at times Saskatchewan, at times Manitoba, at times P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island), at times Nova Scotia, certainly the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the federal government gives money in the form of equalization payments so that we don't get into the notion of regionalism. Okay, that's equalization.

Then there is what used to be called the established program financing: CAP (Canada Assistance Plan), EPF (established programs financing) cost-shared with the province's post-secondary education and health care; the Canada Assistance Plan cost-shared with the province's social assistance or social programs.

What the federal government did was they rolled into the

CHST, the Canada Assistance Plan, and established program financing for health and education. So they roll it into one envelope. But they don't leave the money intact — they cut the money. And every province regardless of whether you are rich or poor had access to CAP and EPF or CHST. Not every province, regardless of whether you're rich or poor, has access to equalization — only lower income, poorer provinces have access to equalization.

So the point I'm trying to make here, Member, is that the province was receiving a reduction in our CHST that had implications for health and post-secondary education and certainly social assistance, because you will recall the federal government had offloaded on-reserve Indians onto the province. We now pay for them. We pay for them as soon as they come off reserve as provincial taxpayers. It used to be the federal government paid for them for the first year.

So all of this stuff . . . And they changed Unemployment Insurance which means we have more people who aren't getting EI, or Employment Insurance, for as long or soon enough so that meant more people onto the social assistance rolls which had impacts on the province and our ability to pay.

I mean here was a province that had a \$15 billion debt, we had huge deficits, and we had a four-year plan. But we didn't know that Paul Martin was going to do this CHST thing which meant that we had to make some decisions last year, which we did. And in order . . . We said we're going to back-fill health because it's important to the people of this province and we're going to back-fill post-secondary.

But the federal government also changed its training strategy — took money out of training. For the most part, the feds paid for training in this province. We're a have-not province; they paid for it. That's not the case in Alberta or British Columbia, but in this province that was the case.

So at the end of the day — and you have to go looking for money because we're committed to a balanced budget — and at the end of the day, school divisions, we said to school divisions, we're going to increase you \$2 million this year to pay for salary increases; next year, there's a \$900,000 increase, but there are further salary increases coming, there'll be a \$7 million funding reduction.

Now by the time next . . . by the time summer rolled around, oil and gas was doing pretty good. You know that the crops looked pretty good. I mean there was revenue. People were spending money. The provincial sales tax was generating some revenue and so on and so forth.

So we knew that we were probably coming out of equalization from Ottawa and we knew that we had the capacity to back-fill the federal cuts in terms of CHST that were coming in this fiscal year, 1997-98.

So we didn't work with our partners to figure out a strategy on this because we were in a position where we knew we could probably increase funding for K to 12; we knew that we could increase funding for highways; we knew we could increase

funding for health care, which we did.

We knew we had to put money into skills training because the future of this province rests on our ability to train people and educate people and to have economic development in this province. And it's ludicrous to have jobs that are there for people but they don't have the skills to get to those jobs. So we developed a training strategy made here in Saskatchewan that would link individuals to those jobs.

My point of view, Mr. Speaker . . . or Mr. Chairperson, what we did made eminent sense.

Mr. Krawetz: — It may have made sense to you, Madam Minister, but in terms of school boards and in terms of the kinds of fears that they had as to what you would be doing this year when you talk about the — not this year, but the '97-98 — I look at last year's statement of revenue and I note that you've commented about the CHST, the reductions, and that it affected all three areas. And it did.

Indeed we see that the estimates for '95-96 were in the neighbourhood of 621,000 and indeed your estimates for last year were 508. So we've heard you tell us before that there was \$113 million worth of reduction.

On the revenue side, which you also have in your estimates, you're showing that the change in revenue anticipated from fuel tax and sales tax and corporate tax and income tax, all of the tax side, the revenue is up \$230 million.

So while you say you back-filled it — granted there were additional monies that you were now putting into Health, into Social Services, into Post-Secondary Education to make up that \$113 million — but you had an additional \$117 million in the sources of revenue, which are there in the books.

So when school boards look at these numbers and the fact that, while they knew for '96-97 you were going to get at least \$125 million more after the federal reductions have been balanced and back-filled and paid — whatever words you want to use — while those things are done, there was still in excess of a hundred million dollars of additional revenues. And on the other side, you were telling boards of education, we're going to have to find \$7 million worth of savings. Why?

(1645)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I don't know if we need to give the member a briefing on how this system works; I know it's taken me 10 years to figure it out and he's only been here 2 and I acknowledge that.

But nevertheless we knew — I'll just reiterate, repeat this — we knew that EPF (established programs financing) and Canada Assistance Plan was being folded into the health and social . . . Canadian Health and Social Transfer, CHST. We knew that the province was going to receive \$106 million in less revenue for that CHST.

We also, if you look at the budget book, we estimated our

equalization payments would be worth about \$314 million — just about \$315 million — from Ottawa, based on what we knew at the time. When you put together a budget it's what you think might happen, and maybe someday you'll have the opportunity to do this. And it's . . . maybe someday you will, but I'm sure that we'll be all gone.

Anyway, so the point I'm trying to make here is that by last summer we knew that the economy was doing better. Oil and gas sales. We knew that people were spending more money. They were very optimistic about the future. We knew from information we were receiving from Finance in terms of revenue generation, corporate capital tax, corporate income tax, fuel tax, individual income tax, sales tax, tobacco tax, all of those, all of those things . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . precisely. Lower interest rates. But we knew we weren't going to get as much money from Ottawa in the form of equalization because this province was starting to recover.

But that didn't . . . that did not affect the CHST. That did not affect the CHST. CHST is . . . We knew about the CHST. What we weren't sure about was equalization.

We also knew that we had some money there to start dealing . . . to deal with the issues in health care — \$40 million. I think that sent a good signal because certainly school boards were asking me, what does that mean for us in terms of '97-98?

I was saying, because I couldn't say until budget day, I was saying, well I'm pretty optimistic. You know, and the Premier laid out his priorities: health, education, jobs, social programs, debt reduction — continuation of debt reduction — and highways.

We had this six-point program and I think that we delivered on it, plus a tax increase . . . or a tax decrease. Tax decrease.

Mr. Krawetz: — We will acknowledge it was a tax decrease, Madam Minister. The point though, Madam Minister . . . I know what you're telling me about the 1997-98 budget. What I am looking at, in terms of the numbers that I was giving to you, were last year's numbers. And there was additional revenues, and I believe that you could have indicated to boards of education that there was indeed a light at the end of the tunnel, as was there. And I've heard you say that, I've heard the Premier say that, and I've heard the Minister of Finance say that.

Before . . . I'm just going to leave that area for now if I might, because I want to talk about bargaining if I could, because that's a very current topic. I understand that you've had a change in terms of the bargaining structure. Could you inform me as to whether you're working with the nine-member team and is there . . . have there been changes within the nine-member team?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, all I have to say is . . . I just want to get back to this, what we did last summer. One of the things you might someday learn, if you ever get here, is that as a cabinet, as Executive Council, as members of the government, you think you know some things and you think

you might be able to do some things. But until that budget is delivered in the House, you can't really indicate what's going to happen. You can't because it's not final until the minister really stands up — the Minister of Finance stands up and delivers her budget.

I understand your point. I understand your point, but I think what the Premier . . . The Premier sent a nice signal, I thought: here are our priorities. And I think he laid those priorities out in November — November, December. So that was a pretty good hint that something was coming in the way of jobs, social programs, health, education, continuation of debt reduction, and highways. So I think we sent a nice message.

Because I know that school boards were saying to me, well does that mean we're going to get more money? I said, I don't know. We haven't completed the budget process yet. We won't know until the minister delivers her budget. But the Premier has said — and I listed the six things he said. So I thought that those were pretty good hints in a way.

In terms of the bargaining structure, nothing's changed. We still have nine members. We have a jointly agreed to Chair. We're at the bargaining table. And I'm not going to get into the specifics of bargaining because, as you know, bargaining should take place at the bargaining table.

Mr. Krawetz: — Is it confidential, the names of the government appointees? Is there not a change from the five members that were on last year's team versus the five members that are this year's team?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We'll send the names.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. In terms of the bargaining process, contract for the Teachers' Federation expired I believe, on December 31 of 1996, and we're into 1997. There are a number of meetings, I understand, that have taken place. How is the cost of bargaining incurred — is it a complete government cost? Is it shared with the trustees association?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) pays for their four members, the government pays for our four members, and we jointly share the cost of the Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Based on fairly long negotiations that took place last year, what is the combined share of the government for their four and their half of the person last year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't have that here, but as you probably know, the four people that come from government tend to be civil servants. They have . . . They receive a wage from the government department that they come from. This year's team, all four members come from the Department of Education; so it's part of their monthly salary.

And I believe that we can send you the information in terms of what it cost us, because I think that's public information, for last year's Chair.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. While you don't want to discuss the current bargaining procedure in terms of items, and I've heard you say that at the recent teacher's spring council, I want to ask you though, in terms of the budget that has been put forward . . . as I've indicated, the agreement with the Teachers' Federation has expired on December 31. If there is a new contract put in place, be it June, be it sooner, later, there may be costs for 1997. Is there any plan in place in terms of how the government will handle the increased costs of a new agreement retroactive to January 1 of 1997?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We would deal with that at the time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Let's talk about a couple of other areas, Madam Minister, since it's nearly 5 o'clock. There is some concern, there's some concern expressed by some individuals, teachers especially, about the role that Media House has played in terms of delivering educational materials to schools. Is there a change in the contract with Media House? And indeed, how will schools and teachers be able to access those materials that they once did through Media House?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As you may know, we had a contract with Media House for five years. The contract runs out at the end of June of 1997. The contract for the video and audio duplication service and the 16 millimetre loan service was tendered, and a new group was able to receive the tender. And they take over the contract, I believe July 1.

Mr. Krawetz: — In terms of also one of the other responsibilities within your department, is in the area of curriculum development and curriculum, and we know the changes that have occurred in the credits . . . or for music credits, etc. Could you tell me whether or not you're pleased with curriculum development and the implementation of new curriculum? Are we on target with the game plan that was established awhile back?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I think that the department has done a really good job, in consultation with our various partners in education, given some of the financial circumstances that this province has had to face.

We continue to implement core curriculum. I can share with you that one of the concerns that I have is that core is not being implemented everywhere across the province. And one of the things that we've moved to do in this budget is to introduce 17 resource-based people that will be in the shared-service regions to assist teachers in implementing core and assist school divisions in ensuring that we have some of the resources that are required in order to implement the resource-based learning that we've developed through the core curriculum.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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