

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I bring forward petitions today regarding big game damage to people in rural Saskatchewan.

The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program so that it provides more fair and reasonable compensation to farmers and townfolk for commercial crops, stacked hay, silage bales, shrubs and trees, which are being destroyed by the overpopulation of deer and other big game, including elimination of the \$500 deductible; and to take control measures to prevent overpopulation of deer and other big game from causing this destruction.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are all from the community of Kelliher. I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present a petition to do with the problem of youth crime. I will read the prayer:

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 fight against youth crime.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are all from the town of Kamsack. I present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present and I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the municipal revenue-sharing reduction, and commit to stable revenue levels for municipalities in order to protect the interests of property taxpayers.

And these all come from the community of Blaine Lake.

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 for a task force to aid the fight against youth crime;

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to amend The Non-profit Corporations Act to protect volunteers;

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

Of citizens urging the government to construct a new hospital in La Loche.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move:

That this Assembly demand the government to immediately abandon its unfair and regressive attack on Saskatchewan businesses and taxpayers through The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, and immediately repeal this policy, which is costly and ineffective and serves no purpose but to appease unions in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give notice of written question. I shall give notice that on day no. 34 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Forest Products Corporation: what is the total value of construction products within Saskatchewan Forest Products will undertake during 1997 coming into scope of The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement.

I have similar questions for all of the Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw your attention and that of the members to a group of visitors who are seated in your gallery. It is a group of students who are enrolled in the LINC program at the University of Regina. LINC stands for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada. They're accompanied here today by their teacher, Marion Billings, and by Jan Phillips.

And in addition to making them feel welcome in our Assembly, I would ask all members to show their very strong welcome to this group of newcomers to Canada. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the members here this morning, I'd like to introduce some friends of mine sitting in the Speaker's gallery. They're visiting the legislature this morning — Murray Valiaho and his son Ben, sitting with their friend Vic Olivier. Also Ben is a good buddy of my son Michael; so I'd just like everyone to welcome them here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

SARCAN Celebrations

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today there are province-wide ceremonies celebrating tangible proof that we in this province take the protection of our environment seriously. Open houses are being held at SARCAN centres around the province. They are being held today because sometime during the month of April, SARCAN will recycle its 1 billionth container. If all 1 billion recycled aluminum, plastic, and glass bottles were laid end to end, they would circle the earth more than six times — that would be some nuisance ground.

What is truly remarkable is that nearly 95 per cent of deposit-paid containers in Saskatchewan are returned for recycling. Because SARCAN began its recycling program nine years ago, a program that takes those containers out of the dumps and recycles them into useful products, that land is preserved for other uses.

And, Mr. Speaker, we should not forget that SARCAN is a good citizen in another way. The employees in the 70 SARCAN centres around the province are primarily individuals who are challenged in some way. Because of SARCAN these people are employed in valuable, rewarding work — work, by the way, which pays for itself.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Dale Botting, the executive director, and all employees for their very necessary work in keeping our small planet fresh.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Role of Bombardier at 15 Wing Moose Jaw

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, on March 17 the former deputy premier, the member from Regina Dewdney, was up in this House condemning the Government of Canada for providing profit incentive loans to Bombardier of Montreal. Mr. Speaker, I was appalled by these remarks, given the lead role which Bombardier is taking in trying to procure NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) flight training for 15 Wing Moose Jaw.

If Bombardier is successful in this effort, it will help preserve one of the largest employers in this province. Moose Jaw and district, and indeed southern Saskatchewan, will be spared from the negative impact of losing over a thousand jobs and millions in economic activity.

Given the importance of this project to Saskatchewan people and the sensitivity of the member's remarks to national unity, I strongly urge the member to apologize. Considering the member's key role in the NDP (New Democratic Party) national campaign and his influence within the government caucus, I've written Bombardier officials and I suggested they brief the member to ensure that he, like other people in Saskatchewan, offer support to Bombardier in its efforts to wholeheartedly help Moose Jaw and southern Saskatchewan join in the world's expanding aviation industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn Volunteers Recognized

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since this is Volunteer Week in Saskatchewan, I wish to recognize the efforts of a few such individuals from Weyburn. Each recently received a volunteer award for outstanding service to their community and to Saskatchewan.

Susan Hagel received an award as outstanding sport administrator. She demonstrated her commitment to the young people of Weyburn through her work with the Weyburn Skating Club, the TransCanada Pipelines Provincial Figure Skating Championships, and the Weyburn first invitational competition. Susan teaches Weyburn youth about self-motivation, time management, and self-confidence.

Dr. Madhi Juma of Weyburn received an award for his contribution to Saskatchewan culture. He has served in various capacities in Weyburn's multi-cultural community; is a main organizer behind the annual Folkarama Festival. He has also taken a lead role in welcoming new Canadians at citizenship courts and was instrumental in organizing the teaching of heritage languages in Weyburn.

Danielle Bernstrom is a student at Weyburn composite, a volunteer at Souris Valley, and a candy striper at Weyburn General. She excels at speed swimming. Danielle has the tenacity that characterizes the people of this great province, making her a worthy recipient of the Athlete of the Year Award.

Sharon Hoeving has been recognized as an outstanding official. She was the Weyburn Skating Club's first full-time coach for 18 years. Sharon is a highly respected skating judge, and trains and supervises other judges.

I congratulate these four outstanding individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Co-operators' Wise Rider Program

Ms. Hamilton: — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Every member of this Assembly would agree, I'm sure, that children are our most precious resource. The loss of even a single child is a tragedy that touches not just lives of his or her parents but each and every one of us. The cost in terms of lost potential for our

communities and for our province is incalculable. But what is even more tragic, Mr. Speaker, is when such a loss might have been prevented.

Bike-related accidents are the fifth leading cause of death for kids between the age of five and nine, yet just 5 per cent of our children wear bike helmets. This tragedy, Mr. Speaker, is one that can be prevented. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to note in this Assembly today, the expansion of The Co-operators' wise rider program. It is coming into Regina in the elementary schools, beginning with W.F. Ready School in my constituency.

For some time now The Co-operators have taken a leadership role in raising awareness of this important public safety issue. Now, by expanding their program to include visitation of elementary schools, The Co-operators are ensuring that each child in Regina learns about the importance of helmets and bicycle safety. They are demonstrating an admirable commitment to Regina children and to the future of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in congratulating The Co-operators on their expansion of the wise rider program and for their commitment to the children of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wynyard Rodeo Week

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone in this Assembly has heard of the Calgary Stampede. Well today I would like to mention an event that isn't as big nor as well-known as the Stampede, but just as much fun for the participants and the spectators.

The week of April 19 to 27 has been designated by the town of Wynyard as Rodeo Week. Numerous events are planned throughout the week, commencing with an auction on Saturday and continuing with a horse pull, numerous suppers, pancake breakfast, team roping, and rodeo dance. The events are numerous and the volunteers needed to make this a success will be great.

Because this is Volunteer Week across Canada, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Wynyard community on staging this enormous event. It will take everyone's cooperation and teamwork to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it will be the many people who have successfully volunteered their time and energy to make this rodeo week a success. This event once again demonstrates the community spirit of Saskatchewan residents and their desire to maintain and foster that spirit.

I would like to invite all members to Wynyard and take in this truly community event. And I would like to congratulate the many volunteers that will make it a success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Yorkton Lions Club Indoor Games

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Everything is set for the return of the 1997 Sunrise Yorkton Lions Indoor Games this weekend. And those of you who have not made your plans, you should plan to be at the Agriplex this weekend. More than 800 athletes from across Saskatchewan and Manitoba will take part in this traditional event, this event which will take them higher, longer, and faster, Mr. Speaker.

One of the highlights this year is the Yorkton elementary competition called the screaming relays, a two-day event between students from Yorkton and area elementary schools who will then hold the bragging rights.

Mr. Speaker, events such as this deserve our support for two reasons. One, they provide training and practice grounds for athletes who will one day compete for us at the national and at the international levels, and perhaps maybe even at the Olympics.

Two, and more importantly, the Lions Sunrise Indoor Games provide a venue for friendly, enthusiastic competition for students who simply like to run, jump, and throw for the pure joy of extending themselves.

I want to congratulate the Yorkton Sunrise Lions Club for bringing the event back to our community and wish them well throughout the day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Z99 Fund-raiser

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everybody's favourite radio station, Z99, is at it again. C.C. and Lori Lindsay, the duo that would like the people to believe they're a half a bubble off level, really are proving that they are on the straight and narrow.

Today . . . starting yesterday actually and finishing at 5 o'clock today, C.C. and Lori Lindsay are broadcasting live from the Cornwall Centre and they're seeking donations for neonatal incubators at the General Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very, very worthwhile cause. They've done this before. I'm hoping that C.C. and Lori Lindsay and Z99 will continue to do it well into the future.

I urge everybody to stop by the Cornwall Centre this day, help out, make a donation; help C.C., Lori Lindsay, Z99, the Regina General Hospital, and all of Saskatchewan. Stop by today; make a donation at the Cornwall Centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Auditor Report on SaskPower

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

yesterday when the minister in charge of SaskPower levelled criticism at the Provincial Auditor and undermined his authority, it had a familiar ring. In essence what the minister was suggesting was that, if you don't like the opinion, we'll go and get another — just as the Devine government used to do.

When the former Tory administration would attack the Provincial Auditor during the 1980s, the New Democratic opposition was quick to come to his defence. In fact during a May 1989 debate the current Premier in this House said:

When a government gets an audited report it has one of two choices: either it has adequate explanation for what the Provincial Auditor points out or, in the alternative, it takes corrective action.

Will your government take corrective action and implement the recommendations, implement the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question, the answer is quite clear. With the difference of opinion between myself and the Provincial Auditor, it's based on adequate opinion, adequate professional opinion, that would give us cause to believe his decision is wrong.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the member and the Leader of the Opposition, and I quote from yesterday's *Hansard*, Mr. Chairman, and this is from Mr. Ellis from Ernst & Young:

. . . in summary, Madam Chairman, I do believe that the report prepared by the Provincial Auditor is inappropriate. It would result in the corporation preparing misleading statements and it . . . (was a) result in our firm providing an opinion on misleading statements, that they present fairly, if his recommendations were adopted. And (so) our professional standards will not permit us to do so.

So the comments that you refer to are based adequately, I think, on the opinions that we have received not only from Ernst & Young, but from Deloitte & Touche and KPMG. The accounting profession is quite clear in terms of what is appropriate, and we believe that their recommendations to the corporation and to the government are appropriate and are adequate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, with each passing day it becomes more evident that this government is approaching the arrogance and incompetent rampant that was in the former Tory administration.

The Provincial Auditor's job is to report irregularities and concerns about accountability through his reports to the legislature and the Public Accounts Committee. Yesterday, he followed his mandate and came under fire by this government. It is sadly ironic that this government, which defended the

Provincial Auditor when it suited its political purpose, is now undermining his authority.

Mr. Premier, the people of Saskatchewan deserve an explanation. Why are you attacking the institution of the Provincial Auditor which you once defended?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, nobody is attacking the Provincial Auditor and nobody is undermining the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor is an officer of this Legislative Assembly. I think that he does and has done . . . I'm not talking about the individual; the office has done a good job over the years.

But may I say, Mr. Speaker, in answering the question that there is a fundamental contradiction in the opposition. They cannot put questions to the government respecting a statement made by the Provincial Auditor and expect in every case that the government is going to accept the Provincial Auditor's view. And when we don't accept the Provincial Auditor's view and back up with supporting statements as to why we don't, you can't say that's undermining.

There's a dispute here as to the accounting procedures. That's all there is — pure and simple. You can't elevate that to saying that it's an undermining of the Provincial Auditor. Far from it. We support the Provincial Auditor.

There is a legitimate accounting dispute as to what should be taking place with respect to these reconstruction fees. In fact the auditor himself points out that he's going to CICA, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, for a ruling on this matter. So he himself is not certain. We support the auditor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the latest provincial budget includes a pledge by this government to balance fairness and responsible financial management. A recent editorial in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* underlines the fact that this government's Crown Construction Tendering Agreement is not balanced, not fair, and without question not responsible. It also states that among other things, this policy is an insult to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

The Minister of Labour indicated in this House two weeks ago that there is nothing unfair about the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. He indicated, and I quote, "There's no cost element to this thing at all," and used words like stupid and unfounded when questioned about this policy which inflates the cost of construction projects.

Is the minister prepared to confirm his comments that there is no cost element to this thing at all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well construction of course costs money. It costs money to build things. There's no question

about that.

An Hon. Member: — Extra costs, Bob.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The question, as the member says from his seat, is the extra cost. We're satisfied that we're achieving good value from our construction. The bids that are made are fair, whether they fall under the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) or not. And the cost of constructing a project now is comparable to the cost of constructing a project before the CCTA came along.

So what are the yardsticks? What are the yardsticks, Mr. Speaker, by which it is said that the CCTA results in extra costs? We're happy to have any information that the opposition may have indicating to the contrary, but we're quite satisfied with the way in which that agreement operates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a cost element to this policy and I'll give the minister a case in point. A tender was recently issued for a project to divert water run-off from an existing SaskPower hydro line in Hudson Bay area. North West Construction, a non-union, family-owned company, bid \$231,000 for the project. They later discovered that SaskCon, a Saskatoon unionized firm which received the contract, did so after submitting a bid of \$327,000 — \$96,000 more than the bid put forward by North West.

Will the minister explain how he can possibly stand by his claim that there's no cost element to this thing, when I have just demonstrated a recent project which inflated the cost of the project by 29 per cent?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with the situation that the member raises, but I will certainly look into it. You have to wonder when bids are being presented to contracts that are covered by the tendering agreement by firms who don't intend to operate under that agreement. They know, they know, they know that their bid is not going to be accepted at the time that they put it in, so it's a little shaky to necessarily draw firm conclusions from a fact situation like that, but I'm certainly willing to look into it.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we've looked at this with some care and we are not able to discern that the cost of construction projects in this province has increased compared to what it was before the CCTA came into effect.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so sure that the non-unionized firms are putting in false bids, just award one once and see if their bid bond will stand by them. Take the chance and award one, Mr. Minister.

There are other examples. In the Sask Crown report released just this past week, it takes a great deal of pride talking about

the Wakaw to Humboldt regional water supply. Last year we tabled information in the House that showed that that project was also inflated by some 30 per cent.

Mr. Minister, we've made a number of these absolute documented reports. The Crown corporations will not release the awarded contracts because you're afraid that you might show that this project is absolutely unfounded.

Mr. Minister, will you either award some of these lower bids or get rid of the CCTA agreement once and for all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well we have no intention of getting rid of the agreement, Mr. Speaker. And I've tried to enunciate the reasons for that.

I'm not saying that the bids are false. I didn't say that; that's the member's own term himself. What I said was that it's a bit shaky to draw any firm conclusions from situations where people bid knowing they do not qualify because they're not prepared to operate under the CCTA.

We have tried as best we can to determine whether there is any validity to the charge that the agreement is resulting in extra construction costs. And we are just simply not able to draw that conclusion; nor I think can anyone who's prepared to look at the matter in a fair way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipal Governments

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House I questioned the government after hearing from 70 municipal governments about this government's \$29 million cut to revenue-sharing grants. These questions and the inadequate response by the minister have resulted in a flurry of calls to my office. And I can now report I've been in touch with 106 municipal governments who have serious concerns about the downloading of this government.

Madam Minister, you had suggested that the funding for municipal governments is secure and that they have adequate resources. You also indicated the concerns I raised were a figment of my imagination. However, even your own officials disagree with you.

In today's *Leader-Post*, Doug Morcom suggests that conditional and unconditional grants have been cut by an average of 38 per cent and admits individual municipalities may have even had bigger cuts — something I demonstrated yesterday.

Madam Minister, will you explain if the concerns being expressed by the local governments and your officials in your own department are a figment of their imagination as well?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to answer the question of the member opposite and

I quote from *Hansard* and what I said yesterday:

... 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 (from his previous experience).

I explained outside the House again to reporters, it's complex, as the member knows, and I may have been misunderstood. But I never said that the conditional side of the pool wasn't reduced. I said that the amount a municipality gets depends on their level of activity, and it varies from year to year.

And I would remind the member opposite that there's also \$16.4 million in futures and \$23 million of infrastructure money going to municipalities this year. So the cuts that he talks about are not to the extent that he would have the House believe, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, you are the one that does not understand. When you cut the funding, activity in road building across this province naturally has to be reduced because you're dropping your share of the funding. So that's a ridiculous statement for the minister to make.

Mr. Speaker, this government's arrogance and contempt is highlighted each day in this House. We constantly hear members on that side of the House criticize Ottawa for its reduction in transfer payments — cut that represents one and a half per cent of total government spending.

At the same time, officials within the minister's own department admit that funding cut-backs handed down by this government to municipal governments averaged 38 per cent. In some cases the reductions are as much as 95 per cent, as I demonstrated yesterday.

Madam Minister, do you really know what the word hypocritical means? Madam Minister, would the minister explain how she can sit back and state there is no problem when very clearly our local governments are facing a financial crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, there is no financial crisis at the local government level or anywhere else. I remind the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that this province is made up of communities. Municipalities are not institutions. Municipalities are people.

And in this budget we have increased funding for health, funding for education, funding for social services. We paid out the futures. We've given them \$17.6 million in tax room on the health, hospital, and social assistance levies.

These are service ... this is more money, Mr. Speaker, into services to the people that make up the communities in this province. They are capable. They have shared their priorities

with us and we have responded. And all is well in Saskatchewan everywhere, Mr. Speaker, except in the Liberal caucus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Project in Guyana

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the SaskPower minister. Mr. Minister, you would think that the NST fiasco would have taught you a lesson, but apparently it hasn't. SaskPower is still trying to take over half the deeply troubled Guyana electrical company, GEC (Guyana Electric Company).

But according to a news article in the Guyana *Starbrook News*, GEC is jacking up the asking price. GEC has advised the Guyana government that it should not accept less than 50 to \$60 million U.S. (United States), or 70 to \$85 million, for 40 per cent of the company. And that's a far cry from SaskPower's initial offer of 31 million for 50 per cent.

Guyana electrical has not only been dealing with Jack Messer now for a couple of months, but they already know all about jacking up prices.

Mr. Minister, will you now admit that SaskPower has no business risking millions of dollars from taxpayers on this crumbling, third-world power company? Will you immediately withdraw from negotiations ... (inaudible interjection) ... And I do know where it is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm having a little difficulty following the line of questioning that the member puts forth this morning. He knows full well that the offer put forth by SaskPower Commercial was much less than \$50 million that he indicates officials within the electric corporation in Guyana suggest it's worth. Is he suggesting this morning that we should up our bid price, double it? I'm not sure where he's going.

I'm saying this to you, Mr. Member: these corporations are pursuing business opportunities where we can recover a reasonable rate of return on behalf of the shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan. We will do all measure of due diligence based on professional information that's received from internationally known accounting firms, who will put values on these assets. That due diligence will be done. It will be reviewed by the board of the Power Corporation and in due course, if we feel there is a reasonable rate on a return and if there is a reasonable risk level, we would proceed. If not, the deal would not go ahead. It's quite simple.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the minister should open his third letter from Doug Anguish.

Mr. Minister, if SaskPower has millions of extra dollars to

invest, why don't you invest it in Saskatchewan by cutting power rates? How are you going to recover this investment in Guyana? Most people in Guyana earn fewer . . . a few hundred dollars a year, and Jack Messer can't raise the rates very much there.

The Guyana power company is a mess. It's plagued with constant power shortages and blackouts, the infrastructure is falling apart — but you want to buy it and they want to jack up the price on you. Obviously SaskPower is making too much money if you can afford risks such as this deal.

Mr. Minister, it's time to pull out of Guyana. Will you shut down this deal before it's too late and we have an NST two?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that there has been an extensive review in this province with respect to the direction and the role of our Crown assets. One of the things that became very clear, both from the external review that was done by professional people across this province and the people of Saskatchewan, was that they should be . . . the Crown corporations should be pursuing business opportunities outside of this province if they're to be long-term, viable economic entities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know the Tory solution. I know the Tory solution; it's quite simple. The Tory solution is find someone to buy the assets at a fire sale price — that's where you come from. We've experienced that and we understand that. But I want to say that this government and this administration will do all measure of due diligence and all measure of business to attempt to maximize the assets, to maximize the return on investment for the people of this province — unlike the Tory administration, who has blinders on and can only see one thing and that's sell it off at a fire sale price to your friends. We aren't into that, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gun Control Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past couple of years I've been calling on the government to fight the Liberal gun control laws passed by . . . by passing property rights legislation. The NDP have consistently said that there's no legal grounds for this argument. But then last fall they launched their own legal challenge, and property rights formed the very basis for this argument.

Mr. Minister of Justice, immediately after question period I will be introducing property rights legislation — legislation that will strengthen your legal challenge of the Liberals' gun control laws. Both the member from Maple Creek and I are going to gun meetings this evening. Will we be able to tell the people there that you support our legislation, or has the NDP's federal leader and the federal NDP president gotten to you and told you to back off on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, our position on the gun

registration system and our challenge has not changed. We are following our course through that process. And I think you can report, along with the Minister of Environment and Resource Management who will be present with you tonight, that our position has not wavered. We are still standing firm on that. We have discussed previously some of the interesting proposals that you have around property rights, but we don't think that they will assist in our action at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Video Lottery Terminal Revenue

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Gaming minister. Mr. Minister, there are some astounding numbers in the Liquor and Gaming annual report that was finally released last week — \$165 million a year are being sucked out of communities through VLTs (video lottery terminal). That's nearly half a million dollars a day or \$20,000 an hour drained out of Saskatchewan communities. That's more loonies than showed up at the NDP convention last weekend.

And how much is going back into the communities? None. Surely the NDP could at least afford to honour the 10 per cent commitment it made prior to the last election.

Mr. Minister, why is it too much to ask that you return 10 per cent of VLT revenue, just \$16 million, to Saskatchewan communities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this question has been asked many, many times of us and we've given the answer many, many times. So I'll give the answer one more time again this morning.

The government was involved in extensive consultations with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) on what to do with the 10 per cent. No agreement was arrived at. That casts no blame on SSTA, SUMA, or SARM. It just worked that we could not arrive at an agreement in this regard.

In the consequence . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No it wasn't because us against the other three — amongst the three they couldn't agree, they just simply couldn't agree. And SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) was involved. And this simply is no chance of the agreement. Now in that context the money remains in the General Revenue Fund.

Now let's be straight about this — this does not go into your pockets, or in the pockets of the minister in charge of Gaming or anybody; it doesn't even go in the pockets of the journalists. It goes back to the people of the communities. It goes back into health care. It goes back into education, goes back into highways. It goes back into all kinds of programs for people. And it's a highly regulated, controlled operation.

I'm saying, don't miscast the situation other than the way it is by simply telling the truth and acknowledging the truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, your VLTs are taking tremendous amounts of money out of Saskatchewan communities: Rosthern, \$250,000 a year; Kindersley, \$730,000 a year; Swift Current, 2.4 million; Prince Albert, 5.5 million; Saskatoon, 30 million. That's about two and a half times what each of these communities receives in revenue sharing from the province. Yet you can't find 10 per cent to honour your election promise and give back to the communities.

Mr. Minister, the PC (Progressive Conservative) government in Manitoba recently announced it would be distributing 10 per cent of VLT revenues to municipalities on a per capita basis. I will be introducing a private members' Bill to do the exact same thing in Saskatchewan. Will you support this Bill, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hear the question being asked again of which the Premier just finished answering. And the member opposite is asking where the money currently goes from the VLT revenues. And I want to remind the member again that the VLT revenues from across the province goes directly back to the people of Saskatchewan.

Last year \$120 million, Mr. Speaker, made its way back into health, social services, education, all of the areas that the Premier has identified. Plus, Mr. Speaker, in excess of \$22 million went back into the hands of the hotel . . . the hospitality industry in this province. The hospitality industry in this province provides jobs in the small communities where the VLTs were located, Mr. Speaker. On their onset, you know that they were established, Mr. Speaker, to protect and secure small town Saskatchewan businesses. That's why the VLTs are there.

Today, if the member opposite says we should be re-examining that, what that will mean of course, Mr. Speaker, is the demise of many of those small businesses in Saskatchewan. Is that what the member from Rosthern is calling for, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High-risk Youth

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the province of Manitoba recently did a report on youth at risk identifying 4,500 young people in that province who are in danger of falling into the young offenders system. It also identified that it is far more cost effective to work with young people before they enter the system and far more expensive to try and deal with them after they are.

When my colleague from Humboldt asked a question on the youth at risk report yesterday, there was much confusion over there. Finally, the minister of Gaming got up and rambled on about gambling for awhile. When he sat down, my colleague

asked the question again, and this time the Premier got up and bawled her out for raising the problems of disadvantaged young people in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we still haven't heard from the minister whether he's going to accept the . . . our recommendation for a youth task force. We have heard him say that there are no youth justice committees appointed yet in this province. If anyone is listening this morning, what are you going to do about this to follow the lead of Manitoba?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was either not in the — I'm sorry, I cannot refer to that — either did not hear the answer or had no attention to the answer that I gave.

The answer that I gave yesterday, I repeat again today. Why is it that the Liberal caucus consistently, continually, persistently, always won't even acknowledge the fact that we have in Saskatchewan — the only province in all of Canada to have been so recognized — an internationally, nationally, recognized program called the children's action plan to deal with the question of kids at risk, youth at risk. Why don't you ever give us that amount of credit, that little ounce of credibility on your side, for this program?

I didn't recognize it; the Canadian children's welfare league recognized it. I accepted the award and I gave it to all the volunteers — thousands of them. We've doubled the funding for that program. Not statistics. We know what the statistics are. We need action. And we're moving in action.

Now if you're saying that we don't do enough, okay, we don't do enough. We're trying to do more. We need your help. We need your assistance.

What we do not need is Liberal politicking, especially from that caucus and especially from a Liberal Party that at the federal level is delaying — delaying — an attack on kids in poverty for 18 months, to their shame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 225 — The Municipalities VLT Commitment Act

Mr. Heppner: — I move first reading of the Bill No. 225, The Municipalities VLT Commitment Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce a group of eight adult education students on behalf of our colleague, the Minister of Education. They're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they are students from the Re-Entry Roads Consulting in Saskatoon.

Now Re-Entry Roads Consulting works with individuals and helps them develop a future plan of action that satisfies their needs and objectives, and the staff also helps them foster lifelong learning skills and encouraging re-entry and success in post-secondary education.

They are accompanied today by their instructor, Ms. Zena Putnam. And I know that they will be having a tour and, if the opportunity allows, I look forward to meeting with them. And I ask all of my colleagues here to extend a warm welcome, please.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 221 — The Saskatchewan Property Rights Act

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 221, The Saskatchewan Property Rights Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 49 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 49, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1997, be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of open, accountable, and responsible government, I hereby table the answer to question 45 and request leave to also table the answers to questions 46 and 47.

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — The answers are tabled to items no. 1, 2, and 3.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 22 — The Justices of the Peace Amendment Act, 1997/ Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les juges de paix

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Minister, I rise today to move second reading of The Justices of the Peace Amendment Act, 1997.

The current Act was passed in 1988. It introduced several very important changes in the way in which justices of the peace are appointed and supervised. These changes were made to ensure that the Act would comply with the requirements of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that every person is entitled to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal.

One of the most significant changes divided justices of the peace into two categories: presiding and non-presiding. Presiding justices of the peace have a very significant role in the justice system — the authority to make decisions that can affect people's life or liberty. For example, they may decide whether to grant a search warrant or issue a summons.

After nine years of experience with that system, it became apparent that certain amendments could be made to improve its operation. The amendments I am introducing today will improve the provisions with respect to the discipline of presiding justices of the peace.

With the amendments, the following improvements would be made. First, the three steps in the discipline process — initial review, investigation, and hearing — are now more clearly described. Second, the person who filed the complaint about the presiding justice of the peace would now be given the right to receive reports during the progress of his or her complaint against a justice of the peace. The complainant would also be given the right to attend the hearing.

Third, the presumption that hearings will be held in private is replaced by the presumption that hearings will be held in public. These changes clarify the discipline process and make it more open and accountable.

The 1988 Act also made changes with respect to who could be appointed as a presiding justice of the peace. The current list prohibits the appointment of government employees, members or employees of a police force, or a member of the corps of commissionaires. An amendment being proposed today will expand this list of non-eligibility. It recognizes other circumstances in which a person would have a conflict of interest as a public official and therefore be ineligible to be a presiding justice of the peace.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us today also makes changes with respect to the position of supervising justice of the peace. It provides that the supervising justice of the peace will receive employment benefits as well as salary for that position. It also specifies that future supervising justices of the peace will be appointed for a five-year term.

When this Act was passed in 1988, the position of supervising justice of the peace was created for the first time. At that point it was not clear whether it would amount to a full-time position. It has now developed into a full-time position. It is therefore appropriate that the incumbent receive employment benefits such as sick leave, pension, and annual holidays, without the additional requirement of being appointed as a traffic safety justice. Currently the supervising justice of the peace receives benefits only because of his concurrent appointment as a traffic safety justice. These amendments will eliminate the need for that appointment. However, since traffic safety justices are appointed for a term, it is also considered appropriate that the appointment of a supervising justice of the peace be for a term.

Mr. Speaker, presiding justices of the peace perform valuable services in our justice system. They ensure that legal matters can be dealt with expeditiously. Justices of the peace must be commended for their dedication in providing this public service. In addition, they do this valuable work for a fee that does not fully compensate them for their duties. One of the amendments before us today recognizes their commitment.

Because of the complicated nature of the services they perform, presiding justices of the peace are requested to attend training sessions. In 1994 justices of the peace began to receive a stipend for attending training courses. This stipend is currently paid by a grant. An amendment included in this Bill will allow the amount of their stipend to be fixed by regulation. It will confirm the existing process.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed today clarify the existing Act and confirm existing processes. It will also provide for new processes to improve the complaint process for the public and recognize financially the important work that justices of the peace perform.

I move second reading of An Act to amend The Justices of the Peace Act, 1988.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the official opposition recognizes and particularly is grateful for the work that has been done by justices of the peace across the province of Saskatchewan throughout the years. And we recognize that the nature of this Bill is largely housekeeping to update the original Act that affects these individuals.

However we are awaiting some further comments by some of the justices of the peace that wished us to express some of the concerns that they may have on this issue. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to adjourn debate, would move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 30 — The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to move second reading of The Personal Property Security Amendment

Act, 1997. Mr. Speaker, The Personal Property Security Act, 1993 regulates most of the non-mortgage lending in this province.

Lenders who take personal property as security use the personal property registry system to register their interests. This gives them the first claim over the car or the combine which they have taken as collateral security for a particular loan.

Saskatchewan has long been a Canadian leader in the development of this legislation. We are also leaders in the development of a computerized registry system which allows for on-line computer registration and searches.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we experienced problems with the computerized registry system in October 1996. During the routine back-up of the October 30 daily registrations, the computer registry system broke down. No data was lost; however the process to recover the data took much longer than was designed. As a result the registry system had to suspend operations for one week to allow the computer system to be fixed properly.

Mr. Speaker, the personal property registry is a real-time registry, that is a system that records the exact time and date of a transaction in order to register the exact priority of all transactions. This is the basis of the priority registration system pursuant to The Personal Property Security Act. Therefore, the shut-down of the system for this extended period made it necessary to pass emergency regulations.

These regulations provided a 10-day grace period to registrants so they would not lose their priority or be prevented from taking any action they normally would have taken during the suspension of registry functions. These regulations allowed the system to be recommenced on November 8, 1996, and they have been relied upon effectively by all parties to date.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill I am introducing today will do two things. First it will ratify and confirm the step taken by regulation in the fall of 1996 to address the registry shut-down. Second, it will establish more detailed authority in the Act to address this type of registry shut-down in the future.

The clients of the personal property registry system supported the regulation to correct the computer problem. They saw it as an obvious and necessary step to ensure fairness in the recommencement of the system. For greater certainty, and out of an abundance of caution, it is advisable to now ratify the measures taken through the legislation itself.

This is the same approach taken by the province of Ontario as a result of the shut-down of their computer registry system. It is appropriate that Saskatchewan clients receive the same certainty in this situation. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill retroactively confirms the 10-day grace period for registration upon recommencement of the system on November 8, 1996.

We are not aware of any parties who will be harmed in any way by this step. Indeed, all parties have acted in reliance on the original regulations and accordingly are not affected by this

legislative ratification.

With respect to the amendments to address this situation in the future, the Bill provides for a more detailed process by which the operations of the registry could be suspended. This includes advising registry clients of the suspension and recommencement procedures. The Bill also provides for express authority to determine the legal effect of steps taken during such a suspension period.

Mr. Speaker, needless to say, best efforts are being made to prevent any further suspension of operations of this essential service. Nevertheless, it is appropriate that we take all possible steps to ensure that Saskatchewan lenders may rely with certainty both on the steps previously taken in November to address this problem and on our ability to fully address any such concerns in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Personal Property Security Act, 1993 and to enact provisions respecting the Personal Property Registry.

(1100)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Justice has pointed out to us, computers are a marvellous invention, but when they go awry our society grinds to a halt and chaos ensues. I think we're all beginning to wonder if computers are our servants or the other way around.

Mr. Speaker, I speak as someone who is unabashedly low tech and has been left as in the rear of the computer revolution. I'm one of those who had to quit using the VCR (video cassette recorder) when the kids went off to college.

But this problem that we had last year of eight days without the personal property security computers certainly underlines some of the difficulties that can ensue when we go high tech and on-line. The computer system of PPSA (Personal Property Security Agreement) is no doubt a marvellous innovation and certainly one that the opposition supports. However, as I say, we now understand the great difficulties which can come about when the computers are down.

Mr. Speaker, there is a provision in this legislation for retroactive provisions. Now this is necessitated because when our computers went down in personal property, the staff had to take immediate corrective action. There was no provision for it in the legislation. I congratulate the staff of PPSA for the way they dealt with the crisis, and I think they handled the problem effectively and professionally. And now I say we require retroactive legislation in order to sanction what they did.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition is satisfied that retroactive legislation is in order. May I say, however, that again when we are talking about public confidence of our justice system, public confidence demands that retroactive legislation be used very sparingly. The retroactive legislation to wipe out the independent judicial commission, the retroactive

legislation to cancel GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) benefits, did not have a good effect on public confidence in the administration of justice.

And the Minister of Justice has to acknowledge that and face up to that and acknowledge that these questions about public confidence and the administration of justice are not the fault of the opposition when they raise them. They are the fault of the government when it deals with our justice system in that manner.

So retroactive legislation is, as a general principle, it is harmful, it is bad, it is wrong, and leads to a destruction of public confidence in our justice system. However, in this particular case I think that it is necessary; that our staff and PPSA did their level best to deal with a situation they had not foreseen, namely that the computers come down. And I say they are to be congratulated for that. And I think it is appropriate that we now ratify the corrective measures that they took at the time.

And I know it's not fair of me to gloat, but may I again say, Mr. Speaker, that as someone who is hopelessly old-fashioned and low tech, it always restores my confidence again when computers and modern technology come short of the mark.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to the minister's explanation, I can understand why the government has brought forward this piece of legislation at this time. And I can appreciate it; the corrective measures that I guess are being taken by the legislation are certainly something that I think is appropriate. It allows the Legislative Assembly and members to address concerns such as we see here and the reasons for legislation.

And as I was listening to the minister . . . And I can only reiterate what other members say. When it comes to computers and technology, we're starting to put so much confidence in computers, but computers are only as good as the individuals who program them and feed them in the first place. And once they get a little overloaded, they can get a little cantankerous as well and give a problem. And the problems that arose last fall certainly are things to be concerned about. And it just shows that technology, despite all its good spots and all the benefits, at times can create a problem and then you have to find other solutions to them.

And the steps that were taken by the government I suppose, had we had a legislative session last fall, could have been addressed through legislation. The fact that there wasn't one, regulations had to be used to make sure that the process continued properly — was certainly appropriate, but it's gratifying to see that we do have legislation before us today that corrects this measure, and certainly opens up the door for processes down the road, should they happen again.

However, I think it would be cognizant of us that we take more time to peruse the legislation, to review it and really take a

careful look at it, so that we can adjust and address any measures that might be . . . that may have been overlooked by the government.

In this piece of legislation, while it seems to be straightforward, we want to make sure that it certainly addresses the concerns that have been raised. And therefore at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill 21

The Assembly resumed debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 21 — The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat technical Bill and when we have been discussing with the stakeholders, we are satisfied that the basic provisions contained in the Bill are sensible and satisfactory. But I think that while we are looking at condominium property owners I feel obligated to raise in this House, the issue of assessment for condominium property owners.

Now of course in our assessment system we use different percentages of value for different property classes. This has a historical basis in this province and the reasons are understood as to why commercial is at a different percentage of value than, say agricultural land. However in the case of condominiums, I think we have a particular problem. Namely this — the condominiums have a different percentage of value than other residences.

Now condominium owners, Mr. Speaker, do not understand why their percentage of value would be set at 85 and other residential property owners would be set at 75. As I say, you may see a difference between, say commercial and residential, business and farm land, but nobody can get their mind around a different percentage of value between condominium property owners and other home-owners. It is personal residence compared to personal residence.

And I simply haven't heard an adequate explanation from the government, from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as to why we need this distinction between condominium property owners and other home-owners. And frankly, I'm hearing from a lot of condominium property owners who tell me that they feel discriminated against. They feel that they are being treated unfairly, and they simply do not understand why they would not be treated the same as other home-owners in this province.

So while the technical provisions of this Bill do not concern me or my colleagues, I think we still require, for condominium property owners out there, Mr. Speaker, we still require some sensible, reasonable explanation as to why the government feels they should be treated differently and taxed differently than

other home-owners in Saskatchewan. Thank you, 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. 31

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 31 — The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the provisions of this Act of course run parallel with The Victims of Crime Amendment Act. Now, Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Justice explained to us that by pooling the money that is collected for victims in this province, by pooling it with other money being held in trust, we can get higher interest . . . Now that seems to make sense on the surface. However, when we look further into it, I submit there are some serious problems here in what's going on with the victim surcharge and with our justice system.

The problem is this. For the past five years we have had a victim impact surcharge levied for people who are found to be in violation of the Criminal Code and other offences in Saskatchewan, and a surcharge on fines.

This surcharge is to create a fund to compensate victims. And what we have found, Mr. Speaker, what we have found is that this surcharge is collecting about 1.8 million a year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it may be called a tax on crime, and as taxes go, I suppose putting a tax on criminal activity is probably about as good a place for a new tax as any other. And I don't object to that and I don't think my colleagues do.

But this tax on crime was levied so that we would have a fund to compensate victims. What has happened now is that the fund is growing, and growing to the point that the Minister of Justice says, well we need to be more proactive in the way we invest it so it can grow and grow even more.

Well my question, and the question of my colleagues here, is why is the fund growing and growing? Why isn't it simply being used to compensate victims? Well gaining a good interest return sounds all very nice . . . that we don't need to worry about how much interest we're gathering if we're simply doing what the fund was set up to do in the first place, namely compensate victims.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know from my other life that it is through this fund that we have set up the victim services coordinators around the province and I know that these victim services coordinators are doing good work in counselling and in providing timely information to victims, and we're certainly not critical of that program. We're very pleased with that program and we support it.

However what we are not so happy about is, that out of the now 1.62 million — 1.8 million, I'm sorry — 1.8 million, getting up towards 2 million a year, is collected, out of that, the Minister of Justice informs us that about 300,000 is spent on victims. So we have a fund, we have a fund that is collecting close to 2

million a year.

Now there are admittedly, the programing for victims say that we support, but in direct compensation for victims in this province we're actually paying out, you could say, nothing — 300,000 a year out of nearly 2 million.

(1115)

Well that just doesn't make much sense to us. And I say, now the Minister of Justice tells us that we're building up so much money — we've now got 3.5 million; three and a half million in the fund — we're building up so much that we have to worry about how we invest it.

Well I don't know if the hon. minister for SaskTel wants to use this to cover her losses on some of her international investments or not. She seems to be interested in the money. And I realize that she probably needs a bit of extra money when she's got investments going sour all over the globe.

But my understanding, Mr. Speaker, and for the information of Madam Minister, is that this tax on crime was actually for the benefit of criminals, not to get us out of the glue with some sour investment somewhere around the world.

Anyway, my concern I say, is that we really shouldn't be worried about building up a big trust fund at all. There's no reason for a big trust fund. The only explanation I can think of for building up a big cushion is if we think we are in a low demand period right now — in other words, a low crime period — and we are anticipating a big spike-up in the crime rate, it would make some sense, I say, to have a cushion. We would need a cushion if we say that we are anticipating a big jump in the crime rate.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. I hope the Minister of Justice would say no, that we are not anticipating a heavy new demand on the victim surcharge; that our crime rate is quite high enough already, thank you very much, and we would hope that it would be coming down rather than going up.

But if the Minister of Justice agrees with me that no, we're not building and planning for an ever escalating crime rate in this province— if that's his plan, and I hope it is — then I come back and say well, Mr. Minister, why do we need to expand a fund that's already got three and a half million in it? What is the purpose of building up this money to bigger and bigger limits? Unless, as I say, the minister for SaskTel seems to be somewhat interested in it. But I would hope that the minister of SaskTel would restrain herself and would let this money go to compensation of victims as it was intended.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we have a fund building up, nearly 2 million a year. Some of it's being paid out to programing for victims, to the victim services coordinators. Virtually nothing is being paid out to compensate victims. Now the government tells us they need a more aggressive investment strategy so that the fund can build up and build up and build up. We're saying, don't worry about investment, don't worry about interest; worry about compensating victims, which is why it

was set up in the first place. End of problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 35

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 35 — The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels** be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the amendments to The Victims of Crime Act could have serious implications for anyone who has or will be the victim of a crime. And as the member from North Battleford has pointed out this morning, there is a lot of similarity between Bill No. 31 and Bill No. 35 in that indeed The Public Trustee and The Victims of Crime Act have a direct link.

For a number of years the law has imposed an additional penalty called a victims' impact surcharge. And it has been in place on most federal and provincial offences. The penalties are then allocated into a fund called the victims' services and direct compensation fund. The monies from these funds are then used to help victims of crime. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that as we've indicated, the numbers of people who are claiming is increasing and it is increasing at an alarming rate.

Many of these people are left traumatized, some with scars that linger for a lifetime. The emotional and material strain victims suffer is unfortunately unavoidable, and while compensation from the victims' impact surcharge fund will not ease all the suffering, it can help somewhat.

But the amount of money that has accumulated from this fund suggests the pay-outs have been few and far between. There seems to be a shortage of funding . . . I'm sorry, a shortage of spending, but the funds continue to come in. And as the member from North Battleford has pointed out, on April 4, during a meeting of the Committee of Finance, very specific questions were asked of the Minister of Justice about that surcharge. The minister has indicated that since the fund was established, I believe five years ago, the government has apparently collected about \$1.8 million per year and about 90 per cent of that, or about 1.62 million as my colleague has indicated, is funnelled into the program.

It was then indeed disappointing for the opposition to learn that only 300,000 a year goes directly into victims' compensation. It seems, if we are to rely on the Justice minister's information, that leaves approximately \$3.5 million in that trust fund — a significant amount of money when we start to look at the compensation that is paid out to victims over this five-year period. There isn't a correlation there.

We as an opposition have great concerns with the fact that the fund was set up to aid victims, there was going to be a surcharge, the monies have been allocated into the fund, and yet there seems to be very little pay-out.

I don't believe that the surcharge was ever intended for that long-term accumulation of money — in other words, the pot of gold. I think it was established to enable the government to help those victimized by crime on a fairly prompt basis.

Now the government wants to hand over responsibility of this trust fund to the Public Trustee. The Public Trustee would then invest the money through a common fund to earn a greater return. Well while we don't have a problem turning over the responsibility of the fund to the Public Trustee, Mr. Speaker, our concern is with the money in trust which has swelled to such an amount it requires an investment plan.

We are under the impression that the surcharge was established to help people of this province who have been hurt by criminal acts of others. It should not be used as a long-term method of collecting money, no matter how worthwhile the purpose might be.

Mr. Speaker, as pointed out by my colleague from North Battleford, the linkage between Bill No. 31 and 35 requires I think, some concern and it requires looking at and indeed I think we have to identify where we're moving in the long term. Is it an intended purpose to accumulate a large amount of money without actually compensating victims on a regular, consistent, and adequate basis?

So with those concerns, Mr. Speaker . . . I think we can address those concerns later on at a time when we can fully discuss the implications of the Bill. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a moment as well, Mr. Speaker, to . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — To ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members of the Assembly for providing me the opportunity, with leave, to introduce guests.

But I have today, Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery, three very fine gentlemen from the constituency of Yorkton who are here on a variety of different issues. But they are . . . on the far left from where I stand is Mr. Lorne Yeo, who is with the Farm Credit Corporation; Mr. Larry Pearen is the director of education, music department, for the Yorkton Regional High School; and Mr. Doug Brand, who is with the Jay's Moving and Storage Company in Yorkton.

They're here today, Mr. Speaker, to do a little work around the

project that we have with the Marching 100 Band that's on their way to Pasadena, California, for January 1, 1998. The Yorkton band was the only one that was selected out of two bands from the entire . . . well from anywhere other than the U.S. We have about 185 students that will be going and probably that many chaperons I expect, will be making their way to Pasadena.

These three gentlemen have been really actively involved in helping with the band boosters to ensure that this project comes to fruition and are here putting a little bit of pressure on people who live in this fine city of Regina and people who are within this Legislative Assembly. So I want to take this opportunity to wish them well in their endeavours. They're looking for about \$350,000 in order to get this band to Pasadena.

There are about four and a half million viewers that will watch this band. They're from Saskatchewan and they're the finest marching band, as we know, anywhere in Canada. So I want to extend my welcome to them to the Assembly today and ask all members here to join in welcoming them as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — To introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to add to my colleague's comments and welcome the members from Yorkton. I know, coming from east-central Saskatchewan, we hear about the fund-raising of the band and of course it is going to bring great recognition to Saskatchewan, and especially to east-central Saskatchewan, to have your band take part in that very, very international event. And I want to wish not only the members present here today . . . all those members who are associated with fund-raising and making that event become a reality, I wish you well and thank you very much for being present.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 35 (continued)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our caucus, I'll extend sentiments. I found it interesting that the minister decided to start his introductions by introducing from the far left rather than the far right. But be that as it is, certainly we're really . . . (inaudible) . . . from the area of Moosomin as well, certainly when we heard that this Yorkton band was going to Pasadena, we really were — I as one individual was — just really excited for the students. I think this is a real honour.

And we know it costs money, and it takes some time and a lot of hard work. And I want to commend you for your efforts in

providing this opportunity for each and every one of the band members as they take this trip. We know it'll be not only educational, it'll be a fun time as well. So congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the Bill before us, as has been noted, this Bill is largely a housekeeping Bill but there are some concerns with the Bill. While we look at the Bill and we can see that it's putting public funds in the hands of a trustee to garner larger returns so that there's more money available for victims, the concerns we have with this fund is the fact that there are so many individuals who are still left in the lurch as victims of crime, and don't seem to be addressed . . . or the problems they're facing don't seem to be addressed while this fund continues to grow. And that's, I guess, that is the major concern we would have.

I think it's time we took a serious look as to the reasons for having such a fund, we addressed concerns out there in the way the funds are distributed and the fact that so many people seem to be without after they've been hit by a crime that wasn't their fault, or wasn't due to anything that they may have done, and they're left in the lurch. And in fact many occasions when they go to the courts trying to seek remuneration, it costs them money and they get nowhere with it.

And so I think there are certainly some questions that need to be raised in addressing this Bill and tackling the issue of how the funds are appropriated and how they're handed out.

I trust that we're not building up another fund, as we see on the federal scene, where the federal Finance minister has now announced changes to the Unemployment Insurance program, calling it an Employment Insurance program, suggesting that the changes were needed because of the problems it was having sustaining itself when we find there's a major surplus of, I believe, of some \$35 million in the program.

Having dealt with individuals who have come into my office because they've had problems just trying to get a little bit of support from a program they've paid into, I hope this fund as well isn't used in that manner. And while we suggest they're supporting victims and we're putting money aside to help them, that indeed the money does not indeed address the concerns and address the monetary loss that victims experience.

(1130)

So while the Bill itself may be a housekeeping Bill and may have housekeeping amendments, Mr. Speaker, there are some concerns, some issues that need to be raised, and we certainly look forward to addressing these concerns and bringing them forward in Committee of the Whole. And therefore I just wanted to raise these and to certainly bring them to the attention of the House.

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

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed

motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 20 —The Small Claims Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 sur les petites créances** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you. The opposition is growing so rapidly, it's hard for us to keep our chairs straight over here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, the general thrust of the Bill is said to be to increase the jurisdiction of our Small Claims Court. And I may say that for that general purpose, members of the opposition are in support of that principle.

The Small Claims Court is designed as a court where smaller matters may be heard expeditiously without the necessity of hiring a lawyer and in situations where hiring a lawyer would simply not be economic in view of the smaller amounts involved.

However up until now, Mr. Speaker, the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court has been set out in the Act. That is, at one time it was \$500. It's now over the years been gradually increased to the point where it's now \$5,000. If it is now thought wise to increase it even higher, we have no problem with that. However with the Bill that has been brought before this House, the jurisdiction of Small Claims Court is not in the Bill at all. It's now to go into regulation.

Now I know that my colleagues have many times spoken of the undesirability of having more and more principles of a Bill spelled out in regulation as opposed to in the Act itself. It has often been the position of this caucus that in so far as possible, we should have the full information in the Act and it is only more minor matters that ought to show up in regulation.

In this case the very purpose in being in the Small Claims Court is now going to switch into regulation if we approve this Bill. In this case the limit will be set by the minister; it will not be set by the Act, which it has always been set by this House previously. I don't see why this power is now being taken away from the Assembly by the Minister of Justice. And I don't see why any members of this Assembly would be anxious to vote for a Bill which takes away a power that the members have historically had; namely, what the jurisdiction of our Small Claims Court will be.

However it gets worse, Mr. Speaker. In the explanatory notes with which we were provided, the explanation is given that the Minister of Justice intends to name different levels for different communities in the province. Now what is the sense in that? What we are told in the explanatory notes is that once we surrender our right to say what Small Claims Court will do and what cases will be heard by Small Claims Court and we give that power to the Minister of Justice — we will no longer have it — the Minister of Justice will have different powers for different communities. And the limit as to what the Small Claims Court can hear will be different in one community as opposed to another.

And the explanatory notes go on to say that that might be on

the basis of whether or not a community has lost its Queen's Bench court.

Now I guess we should be somewhat thankful to the Minister of Justice that apparently he's trying to do something for all those communities where he's taken the Queen's Bench court away from them, communities which maybe made the mistake last election of not supporting the party to which the Minister of Justice belongs, and so we have to take the Queen's Bench court out of Kerrobert and out of Melville and Shaunavon and Assiniboia and Gravelbourg. And so this is trying to throw them something and say, well the Small Claims Court will be able to hear more in those communities.

But, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that, I think it is fundamentally wrong to say that our legal system, our justice system, will function differently in, say Melville than it will function in Yorkton a few miles down the road. That's simply wrong. It shouldn't happen. We are one province, we are one people, and I think the Minister of Justice should treat us as such.

The jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court has historically always been set by this Assembly. I don't see why we now want to give that right away to the Minister of Justice, and I certainly fail to see why the Minister of Justice wants to say that he will give different powers to different communities and have different limits depending on what town you live in.

Mr. Speaker, it is fundamentally wrong to set up a two-tier justice system. We hear a lot from friends opposite about two tier. They say, well we need one tier. We're one province. Let's have one level of service which will be consistent for all of our citizens in so far as it is humanly possible. I happen to subscribe to that philosophy myself. I see no reason for deviating from it on this Bill.

So the Liberal opposition has two basic problems with this Bill: one, the limit of the Small Claims Court should be set by this House, as it has always been set; and two, that limit should be standard for all citizens of Saskatchewan and throughout the entire of the province of Saskatchewan.

Certainly we share the concern for those communities which are losing their Queen's Bench court. We are very disturbed about the fact that so many of our communities which historically have had Queen's Bench services in their community, they're now losing them.

And I might say that, aside too, we're very concerned that in some communities like Kerrobert, we have the historic old heritage building of that community is also being lost to that community because of the abandonment of it. Instead of finding alternate services, the other government offices that were in the historic court-house of Kerrobert were kicked out by the government; told no, you can't use it. You can't even use it for alternate services.

So the heritage building of Kerrobert is now boarded up, and if it remains boarded up for long, I suppose that the sad thing is that that building itself will be lost to the people of Kerrobert,

along with Queen's Bench services which they have already lost.

However the solution to that problem is not to set up a two-tiered justice system. I've spoken a lot about public confidence in our justice system. Public confidence in our justice system will not, will not be re-established, will not be strengthened, by having different rules for different communities. Let's have one standard set of rules for Saskatchewan and let this House decide what the appropriate limit for our Small Claims Court is.

I rise in opposition to this Bill.

The division bells rang from 11:40 a.m. until 11:54 a.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 21

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Mitchell
Johnson	Goulet	Lautermilch
Upshall	Kowalsky	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Nilson	Serby	Stanger
Hamilton	Murray	Kasperski
Ward	Murrell	Thomson

Nays — 6

Krawetz	McPherson	McLane
Gantfoer	Hillson	Aldridge

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Economic and Co-operative Development Vote 45

Item 1

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise because the hon. member for Athabasca is, unfortunately, attending to pressing constituency matters this date and I would like to first of all say that . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. I will remind the member that you cannot relate to the absence or presence of any members in the House. I would ask him to withdraw that.

Mr. Hillson: — Okay, Mr. Chairman, I withdraw that. But I do still wish to say that I am indebted to the member for Athabasca for the insights he gives myself and other members of our caucus into the challenges, the problems, and the benefits of the North to our great province — a wonderful part of Saskatchewan that we all appreciate and enjoy.

And the member for Athabasca has been our window on that part of Saskatchewan, actually half of the total land area of our

great province, and we are constantly indebted to him for his insight and understanding into the challenges and for the problems of the North.

(1200)

Fifty per cent of the land area of our province; 3 per cent of the province's population. Great wealth, great potential. However, sadly it must be said that the social problems in our province are amplified in the North as we see that many of the statistics regarding health, regarding education, regarding welfare, regarding suicide, regarding alcoholism, are unfortunately that much worse in the North than in the rest of our province and show the tremendous challenges there as well as the tremendous wealth and the tremendous potential.

I would like to say while we are extremely pleased at the number of mines that have opened up in the North, there are other areas of economic and community development in the North that cannot be ignored either. Specifically, I would like to refer to the oldest, the historic industry of the North, which is of course trapping.

And I think we all felt for the Minister of Northern Affairs, or the sub-minister of Northern Affairs — I'm not exactly sure where he fits into the hierarchy there — when some of our trappers were going over to Europe this summer and they weren't sure whether they wanted the minister with them or not. And of course he had to do a lot of juggling and promises in order to be allowed on the flight at the last minute. And I'm sure that must have been very embarrassing for the minister, that northern people weren't sure they wanted him as their spokesman in Europe.

This is the oldest, the most historic industry in the North. Our biggest market, indeed almost the sole market, is the European Community. The European Community has sent many signals to us that they simply will not accept furs caught in leg-hold traps.

Mr. Chairman, the number of people involved in the fur industry is now small enough that our government could, for minimal cost, simply have a trap exchange for the modern traps that are accepted by the European Community and the problem would be over. There is a simple, inexpensive solution that would give our people in the North historical continuity with their roots, with say the first industry of Saskatchewan, which is the fur trapping industry. It would give them an activity, an alternative to welfare.

And frankly I question, I question whether there is much benefit in us sending the minister to Europe to tell the Europeans that they shouldn't oppose leg-hold traps. Because I think the Europeans have made their decision on that, and I think that instead we should have a trap exchange for our trappers. This would not be an expensive program. It would cure the problem.

I call on the minister, or sub-minister, whatever he is, however Northern Affairs figures into the priorities of our provincial government — I don't think it's very high but it must fit in

somewhere — I call upon the minister to address this issue of a trap exchange to deal with our most historic industry in the North.

In view of the fact the minister is on the SaskTel board, I believe the deputy chairman, you would think that he would have some impact on northern policy. But unfortunately the mobile telephone service expansion has, I understand, been cancelled for the North.

I don't know if the SaskTel board is no more interested in the minister's input than the people who are going to Europe to argue on behalf of the fur industry, but you would think that the mobile telephone service for the North would be a priority with the minister, and that his position on SaskTel could encourage and stimulate an expansion of SaskTel service through the North instead of . . . I understand now it's been cancelled.

We are interested, in the Liberal opposition, in health care services for the North. We are interested in the statistics on hepatitis B and on AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) infection in the North. Are those statistics available in terms of per hundred thousand? How do they figure relative to other parts of this province?

We are interested in what the minister is doing to meet with the people of the North over McArthur River. We know that the minister was very reluctant to talk to Northerners about mining development. And they wanted to meet with him, and they had trouble, I understand, getting to meet with their minister to see what was going to happen over mining development at McArthur River.

Mr. Chairman, I think also one of the really big industries that could really explode in the North is tourism. Fishing camps of course are again an old historic industry in the North, but I think it's much bigger than that. And I think tourism could be much bigger than, you know the minister refers to somebody flying over the North once or maybe even climbing in a ski-doo for a short trip. I think there's a lot more tourist potential in the North than that.

I wish the minister wouldn't downgrade his part of the province. I think there's lots of people who would love to spend their holidays, spend their vacations, in the North, to enjoy the beauty of what I consider the most scenic part of our province. So please, Mr. Minister, don't demean your part of the province. It's worth more than just a quick, quick fly-over. I assure you it's worth spending some real time getting to know northern scenery and northern people. And I would just never put down the North that way.

And specifically though, I'm concerned about the bi-provincial park from Clearwater . . . from La Loche to Fort McMurray. And this is becoming one of the premiere canoeing destinations on the continent.

And I'm concerned that . . . the province of Alberta has set up primitive campgrounds which are not only a service to canoeists, but also have the environmental importance . . . they protect the environment, Mr. Deputy Chair.

And the way they protect the environment is that if you have campers and canoeists meet at the primitive campgrounds, then any environmental impact is concentrated rather than people having to camp anywhere without any facilities at all, and the problems that arise when people have to camp anywhere with no facilities.

Very minimal expense, Mr. Chairman. Very minimal expense to have primitive campgrounds with outhouses. We're not talking huge amounts of money here. And if this could be done, we could aid the tourist industry for the North; we could also protect the environment.

Perhaps the biggest single important tourist destination for this province could be the Athabasca Sand Dunes. The Athabasca Sand Dunes are a spectacular part of our province. They provide a unique geology and topography. It's now been in reserve; I hope it will go into park status. I would like to hear the minister say what his plans are. I realize it's environmentally sensitive, but tourism can provide ongoing employment and economic benefit for the North and it can be done in such a way as to protect the environment and encourage development at the same time.

I want to know about roads for the North. And my colleague from Athabasca wants to know, when will we get an all-weather road to Lake Athabasca? When will we get some repairs done to the roads that are already in the North and are dangerous to travel on? When will we get road repairs so the old 4x4 isn't going to disappear into the potholes?

Again, our whole province faces great problems. We have potholes everywhere in Saskatchewan. But when you go into the North, everything's bigger in the North, Mr. Chairman, and that goes for the potholes too. The potholes just keep on getting bigger the further north you go.

And I'm interested in knowing what commitment we will see from the minister, or the sub-minister, what commitment we will see from this government for northern roads, for northern development.

And I think it's obvious from these few preliminary remarks that the hon. member from Athabasca and myself and the other members of our caucus see great promise and potential in the North. We are committed to northern development and we will be holding the government accountable to bring in the social, the economic, and the developmental policies that our North needs to make it the most vibrant part of our great province.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — First of all, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to introduce to the legislature, the staff of the office of Northern Affairs. And I'd like to introduce Ray McKay who is the deputy minister, and Brian Cousins who is in communications.

For historical purposes, I'd like to let the House know that Ray McKay is the first aboriginal person in the province's history to be a deputy minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think we have to recognize that, you know, a person of Ray's capabilities; been in the schooling system for many years, teaching science education and the whole aspect in the field of education. By 1979 he had moved back into his home area, which is La Ronge, and in that sense he was also instrumental in doing a lot of educational development in the North.

I know that he worked with me while I was a principal of the community college in northern Saskatchewan, and he had worked for the Department of Education at that time. And he had also been instrumental in working with me when I was working in the North at the teacher education program in its developmental phases. So that Ray has been very instrumental in doing northern development and being part of the multi-party training program later on.

And he's from a background . . . he's a fluent Cree speaker. He's also been from the trapping background and also from tourism area experience. So we have a person in this office of Northern Affairs that is indeed a tremendous person to have.

And the same with Brian Cousins who used to work in northern Saskatchewan in the '70s and early '80s and now has come back, and he's living in the North to take care of our communications programing.

Mr. Chairperson, I think it's very important to say at the outset, in regards to the issues that the member raises, I've always been very aware of colonial attitudes that people had in regards to northern Saskatchewan. And I've expressed, you know, my position to the Liberal caucus in that regard, especially to the member from Athabasca.

And I told them very straightforward that when the member from Athabasca started out he was in the front benches. When he was working with a person . . . when the leader was a member from Saskatoon, and later on they moved him and they took away the role that he had as the critic for Northern Affairs. I thought that was a very bad move on their part.

I thought that indeed when they gave, you know, the critic role to the member from North Battleford that it was the wrong direction for the Liberals, you know, to go. That here you had a person born and raised in northern Saskatchewan that had strong feelings about the North and very, very strong in his positions.

(1215)

For him to be taken out as a critic for Northern Affairs, you know, was a very sad case of old-fashioned colonialism, you know, by the Liberals in regards to how they treated him. Maybe he didn't support the leader in the election process when he ran, but I think that it is very important to recognize that they should still recognize him, you know, as a person who stands strong in regards to the North.

So I would say that, you know, in regards to some of your comments about current consideration, I think that you should look at yourself first and what you're doing to your own

members in regards to your own caucus.

I would say that the tenor of your questioning in general is also very, very part of the whole colonial regime, the whole neocolonial thinking in this sense. You don't stand up for people who fight for jobs; who fight for the business contracts; who stand up and try and get a strong education. You say absolutely nothing about that.

What you start out with is this. You start out with the old Liberal welfare mentality; you talk about welfare and then you talk about suicides and you talk about alcoholism. You start with the most negative aspects of life. Then you move on into an industry that needs great support. You know, we fight for mining development and being part of mining development and forestry development. We also fight for trapping.

I will say this much for trapping. I was born and raised in a trap line. I have strong feelings for trapping. Whether or not somebody tells me I shouldn't go to Europe is beside the point. I stood up as a minister better than any minister . . . Liberal minister across Canada, to go and fight for the trappers in Europe. I stood up strong with the trappers and the veterans — veterans who gave their lives. My own people in my own community giving their lives in Europe, liberating Europe. And also, many cases not coming back home; they lie buried in Europe.

For me to be with them was a sense of strength in standing up with my own people in fighting for their livelihood. In this sense, I thought that it was very important because we have to give the message to the Europeans.

The Liberals have a defeatist attitude. They say, accept what the Europeans say. They say, let's go and buy up the exchange program for traps. Well that is a defeatist program. You're accepting the position. If you read the document as a lawyer yourself, if you ever took the time to read that document that was presented in Europe, what it says there is that it is an internationally agreed upon standard for trapping.

That is the issue we raised when we went to Europe. We told the Europeans that the word internationally agreed upon standard is important. We told them, this is not only a European agreed upon standard; it's got to take into consideration what was happening in Russia, United States, many of the European communities that have trapping, and also most importantly, Canada.

And that's the position that we took, that we wanted to have support for our trappers. We didn't have a defeatist attitude. We didn't go for a divide and rule strategy that's in the minds of the Liberals. We went in solidarity. We went in solidarity; we went in unity. And here you come and speak in the legislature and downgrade that solidarity. I say, shame to you.

You don't know anything about trapping. You don't understand the trapping lifestyle. North Battleford may have the word north in it, but it is still not northern Saskatchewan. You may be a member of . . . you may have taken a ride and skidoed over to La Ronge, you may have flown over northern Saskatchewan as

you have said before, but you don't have the understanding, the in-depth knowledge that it requires to dig deep into the issues of the North.

So when we fight for trapping, we don't take a defeatist attitude. We went in and we made changes on that trapping issue. In many cases the Europeans put in the scientific names for the animals, as an example on the beaver and on the lynx. It must be remembered that only Canadian and North American beaver and lynx were included. They had deliberately excluded the European animals. We told them that.

When the new law comes in and the new development comes in from Europe, they now include that in because we told them that. When you say that nothing was gained, you are totally wrong. You do not know what you're talking about. We made gains in that regard.

You may laugh about it because you don't care about the North and you don't care about trapping. Yes you may laugh on your seat. Well I'll tell you I feel strongly about trapping, and I supported the trapping, and I went there and I stood up better than any Liberal and Tory minister across any provincial government across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Now on the issue of the whole question of how you deal with the first case, of how you deal with welfare. A lot of people say look, we want to get away from dependency. We want to move into education and training. What have we done in regards to northern development? Well I'll tell you. For the first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan, for the first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan we now have over 1,000 people working in the mines — 1,000 Northerners — 84 per cent of those people are Indian and Metis people.

And when you look at that history of people fighting for their jobs when I was growing up, it is very significant. No Liberal and Tory government across Canada can have that record where 50 per cent of the people in a particular area in northern Saskatchewan have jobs to that degree. It says a lot in regards to the fact that Northerners, when given the opportunity, will stand up beside anybody and say, yes we can work with the best of them, and that's what it says.

When we look at the issue in relation to training, when I went to university in 1965, what I knew is that there was only a handful of us at the university, at the technical institute, probably less than 10.

Today I would report this to you: we now have over 1,700 people in training in northern Saskatchewan — over 1,700 people — and you have to give a lot of positive responses and comments to the people who are taking the time out to get an education in mining training, forestry training, teacher education, and some of them doing social work, and some of them doing other types of training.

So you're seeing a tremendous impact of the people in northern

development, and you're seeing them . . . And I was in . . . I went to the mines just about three weeks ago, and a lot of the people used to say the very far North needs some training and needs some input on the mining. Well we had about 200 people from the far North involved in the mining sector.

But what really pleased me when I went there dealing with educational topic, is that, the Dene people, what used to be called the Chipewyan people in the historical textbooks, that Dene people had their own people working in that mine. Not only working, when I got there it was Dene people.

Again a guy by the name of Jim Laban from the Athabasca region, and another two women from that area, we had Lena May Seegurst, you know, from Stony Rapids, and we had a Sandra McDonald. They were in the situation where they were teaching me how to run this computerized control program for the whole mine. They had provided a programed approach and they were showing me how to operate that whole mine. And they had developed the program themselves.

And I said I felt very proud because, for myself, I looked at the people from the Athabasca region and I said yes, they're making a strong statement; yes, it is tough to fight for jobs; yes, it is tough to get a position in education, but the toughness was there; that they were moving forward to get an education and they were doing it. And that was the important thing that I was very, very proud of when I was there.

And I said to myself, look, that is the best way to deal with the issue of welfare — getting at the jobs and moving forward in regards to the different sectors of northern development.

And when I looked at the issue in relation that you mentioned to SaskTel, and I look again across Canada on SaskTel, on the issue of digitization . . . and you're right, I'm in the board of SaskTel, and I would tell you this much: we also have a former chief of Montreal Lake that sits on the SaskTel board by the name of Ed Henderson.

We have sat on the board for some time and you know something? We made a decision in our last term to put \$30 million worth of expenditures in northern Saskatchewan to upgrade the telephone service system in northern Saskatchewan, to get into digitization, and to get into the modern age, and to put that \$30 million in there. And I didn't see that anywhere across Canada. We were the leaders in that regard.

Also the point that you made in regards to the mobile services. I think you need to get your facts straight, I think, on the mobile services. We had announced it and then we had made a decision to overturn it.

The mobile service unit is available for the people in the North because — I'll tell you something — because this is a government who listens to the people. We listen to the people who are using the mobile service units and we listen quickly. We didn't spend any time to do any fancy studies. We didn't do all of those things. We responded quickly when we heard the people talk about the mobile service unit.

And that was the same throughout the province because we had heard the same type of comments throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

On the issue of health care, there is no question that this government has made a tremendous commitment in regards to health care. We've seen a \$40 million health care centre in La Ronge go up. We are now seeing a 10.8, \$10.5 million project going up in Stony Rapids. That is commitment.

Do you see that anywhere else in Canada? No. I see in Canada, all across Canada, devastation by the federal Liberals — a \$7 billion cut.

Jean Chrétien did not only not . . . I'll tell you: he didn't tell the truth when it come down to the GST (goods and services tax) and he didn't tell the truth in regards to medicare. He said he would not tax medicare. But out of this 7 billion, 4 billion affects the medicare system.

But you know, when the Liberals cut \$200 million in this province, \$200 million in health, education, and social services, we replaced every penny of it plus we put some money on top — 40 million last year, \$57 million this year. And when we looked at the North, because of the greater need, we put more money into the North.

When you look at the increase, it's over 7.3 per cent increase on the operational angle on the health operating costs for our new health districts in northern Saskatchewan.

But also the fact is this: when you look at it, on a 7.3 per cent increase, we've also put another million dollars in to help out, to make sure that the doctors stayed in the North. We also looked at the public health workers, the public health nurses. We put three more in northern Saskatchewan, three more in the mental health area. And we also had the community service workers to have support linkages in regards to the communities of northern Saskatchewan. So when you say in regards to health that we have not done well, I think you are dead wrong.

(1230)

We have done, the situation . . . and I'll tell you something for . . . a little bit of it is northern control historical lesson. When we came into power in 19 . . . in the '70s in northern Saskatchewan, the first phase of municipal control came in with the first elected body of the northern municipal council. Then later on, when we came in, we also had the school board elections. A northern school board was brought in so that people of northern Saskatchewan would control their own destiny in these areas.

So we did the controls in the municipalities, we did the controls in regards to the area of education. Now we have moved into the area of health control. Of course you people . . . in terms of health control and health boards, we established three health boards. What do you do? You want to do away with the health boards. You want to do away with the health boards and replace them with appointed people from Melenchuk.

That is a very, very bad strategy. I think he should rethink that. That is the same old colonial mentality that pervades the Liberals that are over there.

So when you see health, I think you've got to remember that we have done well. We are moving forward to work with the health boards. They were very, very happy with the proposal. I'm getting two districts, on the east side and the west side in the far North, and they're ready to take control as we've seen in education and . . .

The Chair: — Order, order, order. I have to interject here and remind the members that we are on the administration of Economic and Co-operative Development and that we would like to stay on Economic and Co-operative Development.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, I agree with you, Mr. Chairperson. I was responding to some questions but I thought that we would . . . we would . . . in due process of debate I thought I would get into it a little bit. But I will stick there for . . .

Now on the idea of . . . You raise the issue of the mines, which is related of course to our agenda because our northern development fund, our total fund . . . in our office, we have approximately 34 point . . . we have thirty-four and a half people, you know, working in Office of Northern Affairs. We also have approximately \$5 million budgeted. On the northern development fund we have monies, you know, going to help people going into the mining industry.

And we were very, very pleased with the effect of the loans that we have made in that regard, and the help in regards to the areas of marketing and education, you know, support systems. And the establishment of CREDOs (community regional economic development organization) where the people in northern Saskatchewan take care of their own community regional economic development organizations, and they then control as we've seen in the South, REDAs (regional economic development authority). So we're seeing that evolution take place in regards to economic development.

So in regards to McArthur, we will be responding to McArthur because we just received the information from the joint panel. And the government will be responding in due time in that regard.

Mr. Hillson: — Pardon me, Mr. Chairman. I was enjoying that. I didn't know it was winding down. But, Mr. Chairman, I don't think it's defeatist to say the Europeans are our customers. They say they have a problem with leg-hold traps. For a few thousand dollars we can do a trap exchange — end of problem. And we can carry on this historic industry in perpetuity — a renewable industry.

Now it's just not being defeatist to say that this problem can go away for a few dollars, probably for less money than financing junkets for the minister to go over to Europe. And it also . . . It will prevent some embarrassment; it also avoids the problem of maybe the minister being left on the tarmac when the plane takes off.

So I want to ask the minister, how much would a leg-hold trap exchange cost, and why doesn't he just do it?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Chairperson, again the member does not understand the process, not only in regards to northern development, but he doesn't understand the process that's taking place in here. What they will be doing is debating, you know, the information and the new resolutions that now are a lot . . . in a better position for not only Saskatchewan trappers but for Canadian trappers.

We're in a much stronger position now. That will be debated. It will probably be debated in this upcoming month. When that is done then we will see exactly whether or not there has been any changes whatsoever. And then from there we will make some decisions.

On the issue as you relate to trapper exchange, tactically, if the Europeans had heard us, we're going to go for trapper exchange, then they would have said, hey, they accept our old clauses. They're accepting defeat.

And that was the reason none of the trappers in our delegation, not one . . . When you look at the president, you know, of the treaty harvesters, you know, that was with us, when you look at Mr. Ratt, Mr. Philip Ratt that was with us, and when you look at William Carriere from Cumberland House, when you look at Pierre Robillard — all northern trappers — not one of them raised the issue of exactly what you put on a trapper's exchange today. Because they knew that if they had done that, it would have been a defeatist position.

That is one of the things that you have to learn to understand. Wait till the process comes into place in Europe. We will await to see what happens there then we will make some decisions in that regard.

But rest assured this much: when you look at the history of trapper education, I sit beside Ray McKay. In the late '70s we had the trapper training program — one of the first in Canada; it wasn't the first, but it's one of the first in Canada — we had a trapper education program that dealt with the humane trapping issue.

I knew from experience that we had used different types of traps over the history, and that it had evolved, it had changed. We had seen the utilization of stop loss traps. We have seen the utilization of conibear traps and other traps that were new in regards to the different types of new snares. We knew that.

But we also were quite aware that a lot of the people sincerely believe that they did not want cruelty to animals. Everybody agreed with that. So we moved towards more humane traps, and historically it did evolve that way. And that is how we wanted to see the change, you know, take place.

So we know that in that sense in many cases a lot of the people want to look at more of the situations where the traps can be used. You've got to remember one other thing too is that people can still . . . because a lot of the Europeans were using drowning methods in trapping. What we discussed with them

was this: well when we set the traps automatically the reaction of the animal is to dive into the water and they drown. Vast majority of the cases, you know, are that way. And in that sense therefore the leg-hold traps could still be used in regards to what you call aquatic sets. You know, those sets that are used in the water.

That, they sort of didn't mind. They were still against all of trapping but they saw that that could be a point of compromise.

So those types of decisions are imbedded in that new decision in regards to Europe, and we should not try and pre-judge the decision and say let's start buying up traps and accept defeat.

An Hon. Member: — Educate, educate your consumer.

Mr. Hillson: — Educate the consumer, I hear the hon. member opposite say. I still have to say this: you know, the hon. minister reminds me somewhat of John Crosbie, and I think there's some of the same personality and some of the same flair and bombast of which I congratulate him — it's a marvellous talent.

But what I think of when I remember John Crosbie is that when the Europeans started giving us opposition over the seal industry, Crosbie thought he could deal with the problem of our customers with bombast and belling. And he thought he was supporting the Newfoundland seal industry. In point of fact, John Crosbie destroyed it, in point of fact, by refusing to . . .

An Hon. Member: — The Europeans were wrong.

Mr. Hillson: — Maybe they were. I hear the hon. member saying the Europeans were wrong. Well that's very likely true, but the fact is they are the customers. And I remember some old saying about whether customers are right or wrong.

The point still remains that with some small, inexpensive reforms we can meet their objections and we can save the industry. Or we can refuse to spend a few thousand dollars on a trap exchange. We can instead tell the Europeans they're wrong. We can practice the bombast of John Crosbie. My fear is we will have the same success as John Crosbie had; John Crosbie destroyed the Newfoundland seal industry.

So why not introduce a few inexpensive reforms that can guarantee the stability of our province's most historic industry. But anyway, I'll leave that for the minister to hopefully consider. I'll pass on.

A few days ago in this House my friend and colleague from Athabasca rose on the Uranium City hospital issue. The people are concerned that when the hospital leaves that they will not only lose their hospital but the water and sewage system that the hospital has run for the community. And my learned friend wanted to know what the government is doing to guarantee that U City will still have a water and sewer system.

Now at that time the minister said he was absolutely thrilled and delighted to have a question in this House on northern affairs. He was just absolutely delighted that the member for

Athabasca asked him a northern question. He was so excited and so thrilled that he didn't get around to answering it.

So I'm going to ask again: what can the minister tell us about the people of U City? Are they going to have a water and sewer system after the hospital is taken out?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to U City, I think I recall that there was two questions that were raised to me from the member from Athabasca. And the questions that he did raise to me were in regards to the hospital. And one of the things that you've got to remember, you got to listen to your own member.

He acknowledges the fact that we are building a health centre in Stony Rapids. He acknowledged that, yes. And also he acknowledged the fact that we had a 7.3 per cent increase. We have put in an increase in regards to that area. And we even have, for this year, a mental health worker that, you know, goes right into Stony Rapids — I mean not Stony Rapids, but Uranium City. So we have done, you know, quite well in dealing with the health issue in that sense.

And the other point was in regards to the Imperial Oil question. Those were the ones that he dealt with.

Now you are dealing with another issue, you know, relating to the sewer and water question. It has not been raised with me. It's the first time I heard about it. The member from Athabasca didn't raise it with me when I sat with him, you know, after question period. And so what I can tell the member from Battleford is that we will definitely check into it because we have a committee that is working to deal with this issue and we'll be doing some follow-up work on it.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that answer and I'm sure the people of Uranium City will look forward to whatever information can be supplied on that issue.

On the question of roads, I have a number of questions for the minister. I'm interested in knowing how much of the capital allocation on roads and highways is for north of 55 and what that works out to in terms of kilometres. And I would like to know if the minister is in agreement with me that it would be a marvellous boon to this province and to tourist potential in the North if we could get an all-weather road to Lake Athabasca, and marvellous service too to the communities on Lake Athabasca, to Stony and Fond-du-Lac.

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In regards to northern road construction, we had put in you know last year, the monies for the Cumberland bridge, and we then went with a Grandmother's Bay road and we did some work on the west side.

This year we have put in about \$5 million. And we're building the roads, a lot mainly on the west side. There's a lot of questions that were raised in regard to the improvement on the traffic going from Beauval to La Ronge, and also taking into consideration, you know, the forestry work that was done, and the forestry work that was done around Canoe Narrows area.

So what we have done is put in some money into those areas as well as also dealing with certain communities like Turnor Lake. Turnor Lake always wanted improvement into their community — it's just north of Buffalo Narrows — and we are putting in some money there as well.

And we're also awaiting, you know, certain decisions in regard to the Athabasca road. With due respect to the band council, they haven't made a decision yet in regards to whether or not the road can go through their reserve, and as well as to make the necessary decisions with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

And those types of decisions still have to be made. So the actual decision is on hold in that regard.

Mr. Hillson: — So can the minister then indicate how many of our new highway dollars will find their way north of 55 this year, say, both in terms of dollars and in terms of kilometres.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well when you look at the decision on the new budget money that come out for the province, we had about a 10-year program of \$250 million. And we also looked at, this year, an improvement in the budget of 30 million. So when you look at the fact about northern development . . . and we put in 5 million on northern development.

It's a significant overall chunk, you know, the dollars in regards to provincial development. We're 3 per cent of the population. We have a large scale of the area and so on and we're part and parcel of working with the mining companies, so they put in that money, which they do in regards to road improvement.

That 5 million doesn't even include the road building that takes place in regards to the forestry area itself. So, it's a significant . . . inclusion in regards to the budget when you recognize that the feds are getting away from putting money in regards to the province and Canada as a whole.

They're getting away from transportation. For us it used to be in the '70s the feds used to put in at least 60 per cent of the money on all road construction and all airport construction in the North. Well, they're even phasing out of the airport in La Ronge — the federal Liberals are. And it's a real problem for us. I think that if they . . . let's say the feds put in another 5 million on top of the provincial 5 million, we'd see a tremendous improvement in the roads in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I understand the Athabasca Sand Dunes are in some sort of nature preserve status at present. I would like the minister, please, to discuss that for me. And also tell me, when can we look forward to the Athabasca Sand Dunes being a full partner in our provincial park system?

Will it require the election of Roy Bird on the federal level and the Liberal government provincially for that to happen? Or will this government look at the Athabasca Sand Dunes becoming a provincial park?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I think in our discussion with a lot of

people from Athabasca region, even as we talk about a road, there was a great deal of sensitivity with the people of that area in regards to environmental changes and so on, you know, that the Athabasca road would deal with.

And I know that many of the elders in the North are still very concerned even about the road in regards to feedback that I have had. And I have heard some comments there as well in regards to the Athabasca area. People in the environmental movement as well as people who are in that area know the fragile nature, you know, of the sand. I mean the soil is very thin and it exposes all the sand. And it's extremely fragile.

And any development in there would have to go through a phase of environmental review. And those types of things need to be properly well done, and I think that that's the sense we're getting from the people of Athabasca.

So that in your view I wasn't quite sure whether or not you wanted to rush into it, but I know it's a highly sensitive environmental issue and also a people's issue from the Athabasca region.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, one of the success stories of northern development and community involvement has been the \$10 million multi-party training project which has been mostly directed at the mining industry.

I understand that most of the funds have been provided by Ottawa and the mining industry, although I think the minister has contributed something from the provincial level — of course not nearly as much as what the federal government does — but I believe there is some provincial, there's some provincial tie in there.

I would like the minister to tell me how much, this year, will be contributed from the provincial government into the \$10 million multi-party training project. And also while we agree over here that this training project has done great, great work in the mining industry area, can he tell me if this can be expanded to the other great economic industries of the North — in forestry and tourism and in trapping?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Like I mentioned before on the educational scene, the province, you know, supports teacher education, etc., and many other projects. We put in . . . we have training budgets which impact 1,700 people.

On the specific one that you talk about, on multi-party training, it's approximately 500, approximately 500 people that have been impacted. So it's approximately one-third of it.

Also on the overall view in regards to who puts in what, one-third comes from the province, one-third from the mining community, and one-third from the federal government. So it's a three-way split. So it's an important partnership. It's one area where the federal government has put in, you know, some money. And we acknowledge that on the one-third.

But they used to put in 60 per cent of the money. What we are worried about is that . . . You should talk to your members from

Ottawa. They should not keep cutting back. We're hoping that they will continue.

We're trying to see . . . The five-year agreement on the \$10.5 million will take place this coming year. Hopefully, they stand with us and say we're going to have something even better than that as we approach the future. For this year's spending it was about 750,000.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I was pleased when the Minister of Municipal Affairs advised us that the RRAP (residential rehabilitation assistance program) program, the residential assistance for seniors, for challenged people, was being extended. And that's, I believe, 75 cents on the dollar from Ottawa, 25 cents from Regina — marvellous program. And we know there's a desperate housing shortage in the North; I understand at least 600 houses short. Crowding in housing is a real problem.

But on this program that's 75 per cent funded from Ottawa, I wonder if the minister can tell me how much of this money will go north of 55, particularly say when it's really only costing the province 25-cent dollars. It's a great program from the federal government, but how much of it will get up to Northerners where we have the biggest challenge in housing in this province.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — For the member's information, the biggest problem that we have . . . From the final statement that I made when we were worried about the Liberal, federal Liberal government, you've got to remember the federal Liberal government has got out of the construction of housing, of social housing — completely. The next three years, not a penny from the federal government.

It's \$8 million provincial money that's going in to build houses in the North. What you're talking about on the RRAP program is when people get a certain amount of money, you know, up to \$10,000, and I think we're changing the amount, you know, this coming year with the RRAP program. But they did approximately that to repair their houses, you know, to improve their houses.

It's very important. I hope that the federal government continues to do that. But what we're seeing is that they're getting away from building houses, period. Social housing . . . they said that they really cared about the people in the North, but they don't. The 8 million that is put in in the next three years is provincial money — \$3 million this year.

Sure we like the money from the federal government on the RRAP program, but it's definitely not the same amount. As anybody who is listening will know, that repairing a home doesn't cost as much as building a home. We're pulling 8 million in building houses over the next three years. We still like the federal involvement in the RRAP program, but I think that it's . . . hopefully it will continue, but I'm afraid after the next election it may be gone.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chair, I move we rise, report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — Before the House rises and reports progress, I want to take a minute, as Chair, out of context here, to wish our Sergeant-at-Arms a very happy birthday, and our page, Guy Turton, a very happy birthday.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — It now being near the normal time of adjournment, and after wishing all hon. members to enjoy the spring-like conditions this weekend, and make sure you spend a little time with friends and family in your constituency this weekend, I declare this House adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 o'clock.

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.

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