

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of citizens from Balcarres, Abernethy, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Dubuc. I'll 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 the fight against youth crime.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present petitions to do with the problem of youth crime, and the prayer reads:

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

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

The communities involved in the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Kamsack and Veregin.

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

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

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Invermay, Fort Qu'Appelle, Watson, and all throughout the land. And I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present the

following petition and I 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 interest of property taxpayers.

And the people signing this 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) are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid in the fight against youth crime.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 37, ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services: (1) on what statistical information did the minister base his comments regarding welfare fraud percentages in the province of Saskatchewan; and (2) please provide any studies and/or analysis done in this regard.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill, the education and health tax amendment Act, 1997.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Environment and Resource Management: (1) how many big game hunting licences were issued in Saskatchewan from April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997; how many game bird licences were issued in Saskatchewan from April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997; how much money was collected through the big game compensation fee from April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997; and (4) how much money was collected through the Saskatchewan wildlife habitat certification fee from April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997?

And the second part of the written question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister also for Environment and Resource Management:

(1) How many big game licences were issued in Saskatchewan from April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996. And this is for the year of 1995.

And I've also got a second notice of written question. That I shall give notice on day no. 37 and ask the government the

following question:

To the minister responsible for municipal services: (1) what interest rates are you charging on northern mortgages; (2) what is the ratio of mortgage payments assessed versus the actual mortgage payments received; (3) how many current mortgages are with working families; (4) how many families are in payment arrears and what is the average outstanding amount; (5) what is the arrangement between the province and federal government and what are the terms of reference to past social housing agreements, specifically mortgage arrangements; and (6) could you please provide our office with copies of any reports dealing with this issue.

And I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Hon. members, earlier today at Government House tribute was paid to 21 Saskatchewan recipients of national and provincial honours. We want to recognize them in the Legislative Chamber here today. And in just a moment I will invite the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party to make brief remarks. MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) will then have the opportunity to introduce their constituents individually.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, as you've indicated, it's my great pleasure and honour to pay tribute to some very distinguished guests in your gallery, seated to my right.

Today, as you indicated, Mr. Speaker, we are holding the honours recognition event, an annual event which gives the government and the Legislative Assembly an opportunity to recognize recent Saskatchewan recipients of national and provincial honours.

This morning it was my honour and privilege to make presentations on behalf of the government to these 21 remarkable people, followed by a luncheon at Government House, and in attendance the Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Wiebe; yourself, Mr. Speaker; Leader of the Opposition; Leader of the Third Party; and other members of the Assembly, as well as of course the special guests, the recipients, and their friends and families.

Mr. Speaker, through their actions and deeds, their hard work and determination, their kindness and commitment, these 21 distinguished people have made an indelible mark on their communities, their province, and their fellow citizens.

They are officers and members of the Order of Canada who have been recognized nationally for their contributions; members of the Order of Military Merit, honoured for their distinguished military careers; recipients of the Medal of Bravery, recognized for risking his own life to save that of another; and members of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit who have made their own mark in our own province; and recipients of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal, recognized for their

invaluable contributions to their communities.

This is an impressive roster of honourees, one of which all Saskatchewan people should feel very proud.

Friends, the great Martin Luther King Jr. said the following, quote:

Life's most persistent and urgent question is what are you doing for others?

Well, Mr. Speaker, what a more wonderful world this would be if each of us had the same answer to that question by Martin Luther King as the selfless, dedicated people we honour today.

A society is measured in many ways— its compassionate treatment of the vulnerable; its positive participation in civic duties; its commitment to culture; and its persistent pursuit of excellence.

Today's guests represent the very best in our society, the highest measure that we can attain. We should consider ourselves lucky indeed, as I'm sure that we do, to have such people as role models, a reminder not only of how far we have to go but how far we have already come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in thanking and congratulating our honoured recipients this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to add to the words of the Premier, as I did this morning also at Government House. It is a tremendous honour and I feel very proud of the fact that we have 21 such distinguished ladies and gentlemen in our gallery today.

What it tells me of course, is that we have tremendous talent in the province of Saskatchewan. We have people who are willing to sacrifice, not only their time and their energies, but also their income as well, in terms of doing better for the province of Saskatchewan. It tells me that every one of us has that ability — that ability to do something for someone else.

And I take great pride on behalf of the official opposition in recognizing the tremendous accomplishments and the tremendous contributions of each and every one of you to your community, to the province of Saskatchewan, and to Canada as a whole. Thank you very much for those contributions.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, John F. Kennedy once said: "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also the men it honours; the men it remembers." Were President Kennedy alive today I'm sure he would have changed the 'men' to "people," but otherwise there is no change to the basic meaning of the phrase.

We reveal ourselves in the people we choose to honour, and in

determining what achievements, positions, or sacrifices to single out for such dedication and distinction. And so sometimes we honour people not only for what they have brought out in themselves but also for what they bring out in other people. Such is the case today, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud today to be a part of the ceremony honouring the fine men and women here today receiving the Order of Canada, the Order of Military Merit, Bravery Decorations, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

We are all here to express our respect, our appreciation, and our faith in such an outstanding group of individuals. You have all sacrificed your time, your talents, and your energy for others. Saskatchewan people have a reputation for giving — giving financially for worthy causes, giving of our time and our efforts to help our neighbours and those less fortunate, giving of ourselves to better the lives of others.

All of the recipients here today prove that this reputation is well deserved and well earned. Recipients here today have done everything, from risk their lives to save another, to develop cutting-edge kidney research that benefits thousands.

Today is our opportunity to say thank you, well done, and congratulations. On behalf of the third party of Saskatchewan, I offer you all of our most sincere thanks for your efforts and your dedication to the people of Saskatchewan and all of us. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — In just a moment, I'll ask all honours recipients to individually stand while being introduced by your MLA, and then to remain standing for the applause that I know that you'll receive.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Marc A. Baltzan, Officer of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. W. Thomas Molloy, Officer of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Dr. Walter Kupsch, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, Dr. Kamal Midha, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the Assembly, Mrs. Doris Knight, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mrs. Grace Pine, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Walter Podiluk, Member of the Order of Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Master Warrant Officer Emile Forest, Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Chief Warrant Officer James Reid, Member of the Order of Military Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce through you to this Assembly, Mr. Doug Van de Kerckhove, recipient of the Medal of Bravery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure again to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Angus Campbell, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, Dr. Howard Leyton-Brown, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, Member of the Order of Canada, and recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize — I had a note sent in. I'd like to introduce Dr. Morris Shumiatcher, Member of the Saskatchewan Award of Merit. Could you stand, Morris? Thanks very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure indeed to introduce to the Assembly, Ms. Tillie Taylor, Member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Judy Buzowetski, recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Lee Gisi, recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, with a great deal of pleasure I introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Lou Hough, recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to present to the Assembly, Mrs. Lillian Mitchell, recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Roy Nelson, of Glentworth. Roy was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly, Mr. Paul Rezsansoff, recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

And I'm going to go one step further and today we'll be having the second reading on a Bill on which he is very instrumental with, the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker. I like to think, Mr. Speaker, we always save the best for last, and I'd like to introduce through you and to you and to the members of the Assembly, Mrs. Ruth Swanson, who is also a recipient of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you to other members in the Assembly, seated in your gallery, a constituent of mine who is a former member of this legislature, former member of the cabinet, and former Speaker of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, John Brockelbank.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to introduce in your gallery today another lady that has actually won a prestigious award, and it's actually Mrs. Ruth Swanson's daughter-in-law, Rita, who had her design

chosen on the loonie for the country, the dollar.

And I would like to tell you also that our constituency will never be completely broke, because at Churchbridge there's a big monument with the loonie in her honour. So if you're ever going through Churchbridge and you see that, that's in this lady's honour.

Would you please welcome her today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

NATO Flying Training Program Announced for Canadian Forces Base Moose Jaw

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this has been a very historic and happy day for 15 Wing Moose Jaw, the city of Moose Jaw, the province of Saskatchewan, and I venture to say, the nation of Canada. This morning, Mr. Speaker, we received official confirmation from the Government of Canada of what we all have been hoping for and working for over the last several months and years.

Defence Minister Doug Young announced today that the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Flying Training in Canada program will become a reality, and that its operational headquarters will be where it should be, in Canadian Armed Forces Base, Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, there is nothing to say except to say this is very, very good news indeed for 15 Wing; for the city of Moose Jaw and its local economy; for the province of Saskatchewan, for our provincial economy; for this nation, and indeed for our international reputation. It's good news, Mr. Speaker, and today we are grateful to the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, many people need to be thanked, Mr. Speaker, thanked and congratulated — Mayor Boughen and the city council of Moose Jaw; base personnel; all members of this Assembly; the Department of National Defence; and the Government of Canada.

They and we all worked very hard to see this day and now that the future of the base is secure, we can all be proud of what we have accomplished together.

As 15 Wing's MLA, I want to add my very personal gratitude to my colleagues in this Assembly and to all the people mentioned above for the great work that's been done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

NATO Flying Training Program

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be remiss if I didn't too offer my congratulations to the Hon. Doug Young, Minister of National Defence, on today's announcement regarding 15 Wing Moose Jaw. As we all know, Mr. Speaker, a consortium, including such companies as Bombardier, British Aerospace, Embraer, and CAE, with the cooperation of the Department of National Defence, has secured letters of intent from several nations to train their pilots at 15 Wing Moose Jaw. We warmly welcome each of these new corporate citizens to our province.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations are also due the people of Moose Jaw and Mayor Ray Boughen for their hard work in helping the consortium secure this success. A debt of gratitude is also owed to many other elected officials, particularly Ralph Goodale, for fighting in the federal cabinet to give 15 Wing a chance in encouraging the NATO Flying Training concept.

Mr. Speaker, we see significant progress, but there are many nations who have yet to sign. We wish the leaders of this project and the minister, best of success in pursuing other customers.

Last evening I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Young, and I can assure the members that he is a dedicated individual who will work hard to get more nations to sign on in an effort to preserve as many jobs as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada Book Day

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is the second annual Canada Book Day and I want to take time to recognize this important event and to recognize, as well, Lawrence Martin, an Ottawa author who originated the idea of celebrating Canadian writing in this way.

We in Saskatchewan are blessed with so many successful, readable, prize-winning and prolific writers to honour and promote on this very day. I want to congratulate all those throughout our province who I know are celebrating this richness in many cities and towns, joining our fellow Canadians by honouring the slogan "Give one, get one, read one."

And I want to share with members at this Assembly how I am planning to celebrate this very day. I am joining many of you in sending my warmest wishes to our colleague, the hon. member from Regina Northeast. Along with my words wishing him Godspeed for a full recovery, I'm sending him a copy of one of Canada's most famous books, *As For Me and My House*, by Sinclair Ross; accompanied by Lorna Crozier from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, her most recent book of poetry, which was inspired by Sinclair Ross's novel.

So I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in recognition of this very special day, Canada Book Day, and let us all try to get one, give one, and read one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Salute to 15 Wing in Moose Jaw

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join all members of the House today in saluting all of the individuals from the 15 Wing in the city of Moose Jaw that have received some very good news today. I only hope that this isn't another federal Liberal "red book" promise that gets dumped into the circular fire if the Liberals get re-elected.

Further, Mr. Speaker, while the news today is positive — it is positive — I understand that there is a possibility that Saskatchewan might lose our Snowbirds. That's something that should be a concern to all of us. However we all should do our very best I think, Mr. Speaker, to watch the federal Liberals and hold them to their promise today.

But today I want to congratulate all of the hard-working individuals from Moose Jaw and the surrounding area who made this happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Secretaries' Day

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that you already today have been from your home to the airbase, to Government House, and finally to here, looking fresh and not out of breath, by the way. And I'm confident in saying that it was your secretary who mapped out your route, confirmed your schedule. Otherwise you might well be somewhere other than your proper place in your chair.

The same can be said of each one of us. All this by way of saying that today is Secretaries' Day, the day in which those of us fortunate enough to have able assistants get the opportunity to say openly what we know all year long — that our lives and work are made immensely more efficient and workable because of our secretaries.

They deserve recognition because they make us look good. They allow us to accept praise for what is always a mutual effort and they don't point fingers when we goof up. There are jobs, and there are jobs which provide support to those jobs.

Today would be a good day for us all to accept the obvious — that one is as important as the other; that neither can exist properly alone. We need, as well as appreciate, our secretaries and I'm happy to affirm that and to thank our secretaries today for their work for us the year round. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada Book Day

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Greystone, to recognize Canada Book Day. Today is Shakespeare's birthday and also the anniversary of his death, as it is of the great Spanish writer, Cervantes. William Wordsworth died on this

day too.

But that's not why I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker. Today is also Canada Book Day, the one day during the year when we publicly recognize Canada's excellent writers, and the producers and sellers of their books. A day in which Canadians are encouraged to buy and read Canadian books by our writers. Brush up on your Shakespeare, of course, Mr. Speaker, but spend your money and give your support closer to home. That is the purpose of this, the second Canada Book Day.

Today Canada is celebrating our nation's collective literary accomplishments in a number of ways — authors' readings, prizes, book give-aways, and so on. In some provinces the provincial sales tax on books is being waived, a promotion not available to Saskatchewan booksellers because we removed the PST (provincial sales tax) on books long ago — one of the notable acts of this government. And 12 writers across the country, including our own Gail Bowen, are creating a progressive on-line story on the Internet for all to see.

Mr. Speaker, the real purpose of this day is to encourage intellectual fitness among Canadians, just as we promote physical fitness. A good Canadian book is, I suggest, the mental equivalent of three hours of advanced aerobics and every bit as important. I encourage all people to endorse and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. member's time is expired; members' statements continue.

Tribute to Lawrence "Jake" Alcrow

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share with the Assembly the contributions of Lawrence Alcrow, or Jake as he was known to his many friends in the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Jake passed away in April of last year. Jake was my first cousin. I can truly say that he's dearly missed by members of his family and his community, his friend Suzanne Aubichon, and his daughter Cheryl.

Jake was very active in sporting events in Ile-a-la-Crosse. And because of his love for sports the community decided to remember Jake every year in his favourite place, the golf course, with the Jake Alcrow Memorial Golf Tournament. This year marks the second anniversary of the event and support is growing. Last year 40 golfers participated in the tournament and this year there'll be more than 100.

Jake also made an integral contribution to the community through his services as chairman of the Ile-a-la-Crosse housing authority, and fire chief of Ile-a-la-Crosse fire department. Jake played a key role in building up that department, which saved a lot of property from destruction and perhaps saved lives. It is so unfortunate that we could not save his.

Jake worked many years in heavy equipment in the mining sector, as well as giving his time as a Metis local president. Jake was a fun-loving individual who'll be remembered for his outgoing personality, his wonderful sense of humour, his ability to talk to anyone and make them laugh at his teasing gestures.

I'm very proud to have known Jake and to have him as a cousin. He was dearly missed by his family and the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Development of the Survival Whistle

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, all members will remember a few years ago when Ashley Christianson became lost while playing in the Barrier Valley area in north-eastern Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people searched for her and Walter Eckdahl of Snowden offered a thousand-dollar reward. Unfortunately, the outcome was not what Mr. Eckdahl and the rest of us have prayed for.

However, Mr. Eckdahl had not given up on his desire to help prevent such tragedies. In association with Child Find Saskatchewan, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and numerous provincial camp grounds, Mr. Eckdahl has been active in developing and promoting the survival whistle, a small whistle . . . a small hockey-type whistle that could be carried by anyone who is faced with a dangerous situation — being lost, injured, or under attack.

I ask all members of this Assembly to applaud Walter Eckdahl and Child Find Saskatchewan for promoting the use of the survival whistle and helping to prevent unnecessary tragedies.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Auto Insurance Rates

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are directed to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). When the provincial government introduced no-fault insurance they brought in a system that substantially reduced payments to accident victims; however we were told the no-fault system would protect the people of Saskatchewan from further rate hikes. The latest annual report from SGI confirms that the auto fund experienced a \$7.2 million deficit last year, and that rate hikes may be necessary. When questioned about this last week, the minister indicated he was still awaiting information from his officials.

Will the minister explain if Saskatchewan people will see their rates increase, and if so, to what does he attribute this rate hike?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had indicated to the House and to the members opposite last week that my officials were reviewing in some detail the financial outcome of the auto fund as it relates to this year's statement. What I've indicated as well to the House, Mr. Speaker, that when I have those details, that I would be providing them not only to this Assembly but certainly to the

public at large. At this point in time I don't have that detailed information yet, Mr. Speaker, but will have that within the next short . . . within the next couple of weeks.

But I want to say to the member opposite that the implementation of the PIPP (personal injury protection plan) in Saskatchewan has seen three and a half years in this province without any rate increases to the auto fund.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And I want to indicate that we have the cheapest auto rates anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker, today, and will continue to have that into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I've heard in the past the minister state that the SGI increases, in terms of the theft and damage costs, have steadily increased, and in fact that is one of the reasons why the auto fund seems to be sinking deeper and deeper into the red. SGI's annual report notes a growing concern about theft and damage; however the Minister of Justice has told this House that car theft, quote, "is not a common problem." I ask the minister responsible for SGI who is right? Which one is the correct answer?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important to realize . . . the member opposite is asking about the kinds of costs that are associated to vehicle thefts in the province, to SGI specifically. I indicated previously, Mr. Speaker, and say to the member opposite, that approximately 7 per cent of the costs to the auto fund are attributed to what might be considered theft. And that of course would be attributed to both adult and youth offences in that particular category. So there has been some increase in that area, which is correct, Mr. Speaker.

But I think what's more important — and I know that the members opposite are in a huge hurry, Mr. Speaker, to have auto rates increase in this province — but I want to suggest to the member opposite that I have here in front of me an article or a brochure that was circulated by the province of Manitoba last year, June of 1996. And they say here, Mr. Speaker, that they're paying one of the lowest rates in Canada, one of the lowest rates that they're paying in Canada, and they were paying \$993. Who is the lowest rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker, published by Manitoba? Guess who that is? Saskatchewan is at \$861, published by the Manitoba auto insurance fund.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it is true that we continue to lose money in the auto fund. We have a \$7 million loss this year that the minister needs to be able to explain.

I've also heard the minister in charge of SGI indicate that vehicle collisions involving animals is partly to blame for the auto fund's \$7 million loss. Now if I wonder, is it merely coincidental that an apparent increase in animal-related collisions comes after this government introduced its big game

compensation fund, which requires that hunters pay \$11 when they purchase a hunting licence.

After all between 1995 and '96, the number of white-tailed deer licences purchased dropped from 72,000 to 60,000. There would appear to be a connection. There would appear to be a connection between the fact that 12,000 fewer hunters are controlling our white-tailed deer population on highways . . .

Will the minister explain why his government is contributing to a problem that may result in SGI rate increases in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought that the responsibility of the minister of SGI was to ensure that the auto fund was stable and to provide some kind of an opportunity here to balance the auto fund. I had no idea, Mr. Speaker, that the minister of SGI had any responsibility for the reproduction of wildlife in this province, Mr. Speaker, no idea.

But I want to suggest to the member opposite that there are lots of reasons for why the auto fund has increased its costs to do business in Saskatchewan. Number one, Mr. Speaker, is that we've had two very serious winters in this province, of which the automobile insurance rates have gone up because of the increase to the repair costs. The technology in the new vehicles today, Mr. Speaker, is significantly greater than it has been in the past, and the cost of repairing those vehicles obviously put pressure on the cost of the cars.

But I think what else is important here, Mr. Speaker, is that we're told that when the economy of a province is better, so does the insurance costs of repairing vehicles increase. And as a result of that, we have a very, very prominent economy in Saskatchewan today and that's affecting our automobile insurance rates as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rabbit Lake Health Centre

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the residents of Rabbit Lake have been told that their health centre is going to be closed the end of June. Mr. Speaker, this was a former hospital, downgraded by the government. It's only 10 years old. The local residents raised \$250,000 to build this facility and now it's going to be closed for lack of provincial funding.

When the provincial budget was released, the Minister of Health told us that there were two messages he wanted to get out. One, that health care jobs were now safe, no more firing of nurses. And two, no more closure of facilities.

Can the government tell us why, given that promise that the cuts were over, the downgrading was done, why is the Rabbit Lake Health Centre now closing? Why do we lose another 15 long-term care beds, another 25 employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the facility to which the member refers, I am confident that the district of which that facility will have been a part will have made a careful and considered decision about that facility, and facilities and programs within their district. I'm confident of that, Mr. Speaker.

But what I am further confident of is this: this government has back-filled 100 per cent every dime of health care funding from the Liberals in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker; plus, Mr. Speaker, plus 57 more million dollars. That's what I'm sure of, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the residents are being bundled out to all different homes in a hundred mile radius of Rabbit Lake. Family visits are going to be reduced because they won't be close to where they have lived their entire lives.

You keep telling us we have the best health care system in the world. Well we had the best health care system in the world until you took the meat cleaver to it.

Will you explain how it is that you still have \$16 million to fritter away on an NST fiasco in the United States but you don't have money for the Rabbit Lake Health Centre?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, do I have to remind the member again of this government's financial commitment to health care in this province? Do I have to do that again? He nods his head.

Then let me remind him, Mr. Speaker, that unlike his Liberal counterparts in the Maritimes and in other parts of this country, unlike his federal Liberal government, we have not cut health care spending, Mr. Speaker. I repeat, we have back-filled every dollar taken from health care by the federal Liberal government. And in this budget year we have added, Mr. Speaker, \$57 million.

Again I say I am confident that the district of which that facility that the member speaks, at Rabbit Lake, will have made a very careful and considered decision and that the needs and the health needs of their people will be adequately met.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, so far this week the government has blamed university tuition fee increases on the university administration instead of inadequate funding from the provincial government, they have blamed the gutting of the provincial drug plan on drug companies, and now they blame the closing of the Rabbit Lake Health Centre on the federal government and/or the local health district.

My question to the Minister of Social Services: are you running a provincial government or are you running an excuse factory?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is good to have this defence of the federal Liberal government from the provincial Liberal caucus in this case. It is just good to see what's happening here, Mr. Speaker.

A federal Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, who before election committed to Canadians they would rid us of Bill C-91, providing prescription drug cost benefit for every Canadian. They didn't do it. They committed they would rid us of the GST (goods and services tax). They haven't done that.

Mr. Speaker, they committed to consider health care and medicare a sacred trust, they called it. Well their handling of this sacred trust has been to slash, slash, slash the funding for health care across Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can just tell you this. I can just tell you this, Mr. Speaker. I for one and this government, we're tired, we're sick and tired of the federal government making the cuts and the people feeling the pain and the provinces being asked to take the blame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I wanted to know if the minister cared about the people of Rabbit Lake or cared about making excuses, and I think I got my answer. Thank you.

Yesterday my colleague from Humboldt underlined the need for legislation to address the growing problem of child prostitution and called upon the minister to support her Bill. The minister indicated in his response that either the issue was already covered in present legislation or was covered by the Criminal Code.

Mr. Speaker, defining child prostitution as child abuse is something that is clearly within provincial jurisdiction. And . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the hon. member for North Battleford put his question. Now there's much enthusiasm for assisting both the questions and the answers, but I'll ask all hon. members to allow the members on their feet to be heard.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, that's fine — I quite accept that the emptier the barrel, the louder the echo.

Mr. Speaker, defining child prostitution as child abuse is clearly within provincial jurisdiction. Alberta and Manitoba are trying to address the issue. Why doesn't Saskatchewan? Why will you not accept responsibility? Why will you not give credit to the member for Humboldt in adopting these measures that are within provincial jurisdiction and will aid the problem of child prostitution?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if there's time in question period to clarify the issues for the member, and I would have expected he would understand some of these issues.

The member from Humboldt has recommended in her proposal for legislation that we do two things. One, that we extend The Child and Family Services Act to include up to age 18. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you today that our current Act has provision in it to deal with 16- and 17-year-olds. Done.

Mr. Speaker, the other suggestion that the member has made is that the Minister of Social Services and the department and the Government of Saskatchewan should be able to receive donations. Well in fact, Mr. Speaker, that now is the case — we can receive donations.

Now I am not here to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we should not be looking at all of our legislation to see if there is not other effective ways we can deal with the children on the streets and those adults who would abuse them. But one thing is for sure, one thing is for sure — and this would apply across Canada — if we could achieve the changes in the Criminal Code to make it easier to prosecute those adult abusers, we would go a long ways in dealing with this issue. And that is something I am sure the member could this afternoon call his friends in Ottawa, tell him to get at it before they call the election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Taxation

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, another month has passed and the White Bear Casino is still refusing to pay its taxes. Back in March your government set up an April deadline for them to pay up or have their liquor licence pulled. That deadline came and went and nothing was done. And now you've set another deadline of May 4, and White Bear officials say they're going to ignore that deadline as well. Mr. Premier, you keep drawing a line in the sand and they keep kicking the sand in your face.

Mr. Premier, are you going to act on this new deadline, or are we simply . . . or is it simply another idle threat that the White Bear Band can ignore without fear of penalty?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's information is inaccurate. He's obviously been reading the paper again. Because we don't want to comment on individual tax cases and the circumstances surrounding them, I will not be commenting on the matter he's raising.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, if any other bar in this province had been refusing to pay its taxes, you'd have yanked their liquor licence months ago. But White Bear just keeps going with one extension after another and after another. Nobody gets to — nobody that I know of in this province — gets to negotiate whether they pay their taxes or not. We

wonder why the double standard. If an Indian band isn't paying its fair share, that's unfair to every other taxpayer in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to put an end to this blatant, blatant tax evasion?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I say again that the reference that the member opposite makes with respect to a deadline has nothing to do with the tax collection mechanism. But I will say to the member opposite and to all those who are watching, that we are in every case of every taxpayer in Saskatchewan who avoids the payment of taxes, taking aggressive action in order to ensure that those taxes are collected and this will apply to this case as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hunting Licence Fees

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, perhaps White Bear has a reconstruction fee.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister for the Environment. Mr. Minister, last year when you imposed your new \$11 hunting fee, many hunters said it was the last straw and they were going to quit hunting. As it turns out, over 11,000 deer hunters have followed through on that threat. In 1995 there were 71,500 white-tail licences sold; last year there were 60,400 after your \$11 fee went into effect. This means less money was being spent in communities by hunters. It means more deer were left to damage crops.

Mr. Minister, will you now admit that your \$11 big game damage fee was a mistake and cancel the fee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contrary to what the hon. member believes, having the big game damage compensation program in place was one of the best things we have done. With over 1,800 claims and valued at one and a half million dollars in compensation pay-outs to landowners, we are very pleased to have the big game damage program in place. And we have since then of course added \$2 million from general revenue to top up the program for this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly it's only the NDP (New Democratic Party) that think a new tax is a good thing.

Mr. Minister, the purpose of this fee was to raise money to pay big game damage, but you actually took in less money in 1996 than you did in 1995. The 71,500 licences you sold in 1995 at \$46 apiece raised about \$3.45 million. The 60,400 licences you sold in '96 at \$57 apiece raised about \$3.3 million — \$150,000 less than the previous year.

Mr. Minister, you would have been better off leaving the cost of

deer licences alone and simply paying the big game damage out of existing revenues. And that's not even considering the loss of economic activity and taxes due to fewer hunters, or in addition, the big game damage caused by more deer, or less deer being killed.

Mr. Minister, after question period I will be introducing legislation to cancel your ill-conceived big game damage fee. Will you support this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting this legislation because the fee will be in place this coming year.

We had about a 10 per cent drop in the number of licensed hunters out in the field. This is attributed to a number of factors: an early fall, early winter. Hunters just simply did not go out. We also had the case where Metis hunters did not have to purchase licences.

So there's a number of factors which did see this drop in the number of hunters out. But we expect this will pick up again. Usually after an increase, there is a drop in the number of hunters out in the field.

Our licences are on par with those in Alberta and we will continue to work with both the hunter organizations as well as landowners to ensure that crop depredation is dealt with in the most fair and equitable manner as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the fall of 1995 we also had snow on the ground before November 1, so last year was not an exception, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, a couple of months ago you issued a warning about dogs killing deer. You said that if you caught any dogs killing deer, you'd go out and kill those dogs. Of course there's a couple of reasons dogs have been killing deer. One, because they're dogs; two, because there are too many deer this year because of your stupid \$11 fee.

Mr. Minister, instead of threatening people's dogs, why don't you help control the deer population by dropping your \$11 fee?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well I have hand it to the hon. member. He's brought everything possible into this question. We are going to continue on with the fee. And the member's comments, many of them are not accurate, Mr. Speaker.

We do not have record high numbers of deer. We do not shoot every dog that we observe chasing deer. There's a lot of common sense and discretion used. Unlike the member opposite, we believe in working with the people, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Housing in the North

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a news flash for the Minister of Northern Affairs. There is no housing markets in northern Saskatchewan and people are having a great amount of problems with housing.

Mr. Speaker, I've recently received a number of concerns from people who are working up North and living in government housing. These working people believe they are being penalized because they try and make a living. They must pay the government 25 per cent of their gross income on a 25-year mortgage. That may work in southern Saskatchewan, but it doesn't work in the North.

Some of the monthly rents range from 600 to \$800 per month. Over 25 years, Mr. Speaker, that payment amounts to between 180 to a quarter of a million dollars for one house in northern Saskatchewan. If these people try to sell their homes, Mr. Speaker, they'll not be able to recover anything but a very small portion of those amounts. We're not suggesting those on social assistance should be punished, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister please explain why people who are attempting to work for a living are being penalized for their efforts?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Number one, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually very proud to answer this question because for the first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan we have 1,000 people working at the mines.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — For the first time in the history of northern Saskatchewan, we have 50 per cent of the workforce in the many areas of the different jobs that are there. That is what we're proud of.

Now in answer to that question on housing, the federal Liberals have cut down housing to zero — zero on housing construction. They're out of social housing. They have a bit of RRAP (residential rehabilitation assistance program) program, maintenance program. They might even cut it out after this coming election; \$8 million by this government in housing in the next three years — \$8 million by this government, and the federal Liberals, zero. That is our commitment to housing and we will continue to help the people of the North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of the thousand-odd jobs the Minister of Northern Affairs is speaking about, many of those people live in government houses and very soon some of them won't be able to afford to live in government houses. So on one hand, you give them a job; on the other hand, you throw them out of their house.

Mr. Speaker, the North desperately needs workers and industries that when people work . . . we have a policy that discriminates against the working people. Robert Aubichon of Buffalo Narrows is one of those people. He's working, he's

contributing to the economy and the tax base; yet he must pay an unreasonable mortgage rate to pay down his home.

What is of great concern to me is how a working family cannot afford a home in northern Saskatchewan. We need a two-pronged approach in northern housing, Mr. Speaker — one for social housing and the other for working families, similar to the recently announced remote housing program. Now that's a program that works, Mr. Speaker.

Will this government at least agree to develop a pilot project to establish the true market value of homes in the North so that realistic mortgage rates can be charged, which would eliminate this incentive against working people? And will the minister look at expanding the success of the remote housing program to existing mortgages?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, again I would like to tell the member from Athabasca that indeed we have \$8 million for the next three years for the people in northern Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — Where are the Liberal dollars?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Any Liberal dollars? Zero for construction on housing — zero.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in regards to, in regards to jobs — yes, a lot of the people are having jobs in the North. Some of the jobs are \$15 an hour at the lower end. Some of the people are 22 and \$23 an hour. For the first time people are being paid good wages in the mines, and the member from Athabasca may not be proud of that but I'm proud of that and I'm proud of the workers in northern Saskatchewan, who are going to be building their own houses.

We're also having a new strategy in housing which will have a situation where there is sweat equity and a lot of those workers are starting to do that, Mr. Speaker. And they're moving forward and building their own homes as we move forward to a new future, and members should be supporting us on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 228 — The Saskatchewan Big Game Damage Compensation Fee Act

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill No. 228, The Saskatchewan Big Game Damage Compensation Fee Act.

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

(1430)

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

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, to request leave of the Assembly to make a motion which would routinely transfer the estimates from the Legislative Assembly to the Standing Committee on Estimates. I hereby request leave.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Referral of Estimates to Standing Committee on Estimates

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Watrous:

That the estimates for the Legislative Assembly, subvotes LG01 to LG06; estimates for the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, subvotes LG07; and supplementary estimates for the Legislative Assembly, subvotes LG01 and LG03, being vote 21, and the estimates for the Provincial Auditor, being vote 28, be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Bill No. 18

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 18 — The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a couple of points this afternoon regarding Bill No. 18 and how it may apply to the technologists and technicians of Saskatchewan.

I think very clearly we must recognize that this Act will establish the legal authority to allow the Saskatchewan applied science technologists and technicians to establish their own professional association. There has been a very significant lobby. Many years of hard work has been put in by the people, the technicians, the technologists who work in this province, to indeed be able to create that professional association.

I want to also indicate that the level of recognition and certification is very, very important with the mobile labour force that we have in the province of Saskatchewan. People move from one job to another in terms of areas in the province, and it is very important that a professional organization has the ability of course to not only register but also to be aware of the various people that are working within the province of Saskatchewan.

We're also very encouraged by the fact that . . . I think the recognition of a professional association may create greater employment opportunities here in Saskatchewan. We are aware of course, that when a group becomes a professional organization it gains national recognition, and as a result we may be able to attract other people who will be able to join the Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Association and come here to Saskatchewan to work.

Bill No. 18 lays out the standards and guidelines that all professional members of the association will have to follow. And we've taken a good, close look at that to see whether or not it corresponds to other professional associations, how it will relate to the other associations, whether there are different guidelines than other professional associations. And we found that this is very, very comparable and compatible with what occurs in most professional institutions.

We're also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to denote that a lot of impressive background work has taken place on this Bill. We see many, many hours of work by the technicians and the technologists in terms of putting together the guidelines, the rules, the regulations that are contained in this Bill.

I've had the pleasure of meeting with . . . and I'm just going to recognize three of the individuals who I found very, very helpful. I'd like to recognize Jaime Briltz, Ron Smith, and Daniel Crites. These three people were very willing to share any concerns that they had, and of course it was a two-way communication in terms of the ability for us, as an opposition, to be able to contact these members to find out whether or not there were specific concerns from individuals, which we did get a number of phone calls from individuals, flagging little concerns; that they wanted to be aware that these were understood by the association executive. And I want to commend these people for their dedication to helping us better understand, and I think as a whole, the province of Saskatchewan, better understanding why there was a need for such a Bill.

There are a few specific questions that we have relative to specific clauses, Mr. Speaker, and those I'm sure that the minister will be more than willing to address and explain during the Committee of the Whole. And with that I would suggest that the Bill proceed.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to share just a few brief words on Bill 18. This is legislation that is long overdue. I can remember dealing with some of the issues discussed in this legislation, and brought to a head in this legislation, I can remember dealing with these issues in the mid-1980s and nothing happened then; nothing happened in the '90s. We now find ourselves in the year 1997 and, as befits the professionalism that the technologists and technicians bring to their work here in Saskatchewan, they now will have professional legislation.

I want to commend them for their persistence in the face of considerable — well let's say begrudging — acknowledgement of their profession, their persistence in pursuing their objectives and finally seeing to it that government does respond to their

needs so that they can respond to the needs of society through their profession.

And I'd like to in closing commend Jaime Briltz in particular for her leadership role in directing the profession. And this is legislation that's long overdue. I'm glad to see it on the floor of the legislature. I say, let's get on with the show and give it third reading. 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. 11

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 11 — The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an interesting Bill and there are certain parts of that particular Bill that we support. I think particularly the change of moving the redrawing of boundaries to ten years from five is definitely an improvement. Leaving it at five means that any particular constituency is not going to be sure who they're going to have for an MLA in the next election. And I think that need to draw that affiliation between an MLA and his constituency is an important aspect. And people in constituencies should be allowed to at least vote for an MLA at least twice. And this should allow for that and we support that part of it.

Without that we would have a situation where an MLA could find himself in a different situation with a different set of constituents every time that the public goes to the polls. That would make it very difficult for him to represent a constituency fairly because at all times he'd have to pay attention to the area around the boundaries of his own constituency because those might well be part of his next constituency. And so there'd be that kind of a tendency to sort of have to almost cover the whole province, not knowing where you're going to be at. This Bill corrects that problem, and to that extent is a very positive Bill.

However there is a couple of things about this Bill that we find negative and we find that they are really totally unacceptable. Basically, rural Saskatchewan gets kicked fairly hard with this particular Bill. And that is particularly section 14 which makes an amendment that we now have a voter population and that is changing to the population of each proposed constituency. So now we have a unique situation that you count the total number of bodies in a constituency, not the number of voters.

Now the explanatory notes point out that this has been the case in the past election. We didn't like that change, and we sure don't like this change any more because it's the same sort of thing in trying to get it through again.

It just happens to be another nail in the representation in rural Saskatchewan, where in rural Saskatchewan there will be more

voters per constituency than you'll have in other areas. It's bad enough that rural Saskatchewan lost eight seats. We have very large constituencies out there. This particular amendment makes those constituencies still larger and puts them at another disadvantage.

The job of an MLA, as we know, is to answer to your voters. According to this particular change you're not answering to voters, you're answering to all the particular bodies that are in there and not necessarily just to the voters. By watering down the connection between the constituency and the voters, you water down the concept that we always had — that you get one vote as an individual. In this case it's quite different.

Let us look at what will happen in the 1995 election. I think we'll see where we're going with this rural situation that we're discussing, where rural Saskatchewan gets kicked again.

In Moosomin in that 1995 election there were 11,407 voters. Cannington, again 11,491; Cypress Hills also over 11,000, with 11,014. If we start looking at the city and we look at the number of voters, here's what happens. Notice those rural ones were all over 11,000. Urban ones: Regina Dewdney, 10,158; Regina Elphinstone, 10,764; Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, 10,417; Saskatoon Fairview — now we're under 10,000 — 9,378; Saskatoon Riversdale, 9,820.

There's a big difference. Where the rural areas had 11,000 voters, these city ones are down to 9,000, barely 9,000 voters. This adds up to variations that are as high in some cases as 17 per cent between the rural and the urban seats.

Now we already have constituencies in rural Saskatchewan that by their size are virtually hundreds of miles from end to end. And now we're going to ensure that the number of voters in those constituencies are higher by 17 per cent. You've increased the size, you've increased the numbers of voters in there.

Can't be a coincidence. I'm sure those numbers were noted before. It happens to be that word we've heard about since we started school decades ago. It's called gerrymandering, and it hasn't changed. It's manipulating the boundaries to the benefit of the people that happen to be in the situation to do that.

We object to that particular amendment. Instead of striking out the one remaining reference to voter population, that phrase should be reinserted throughout the rest of the Bill and particularly into the constituency formula.

Our caucus will seek to address these problems in committee. Until that time we will withhold final judgement on this Bill, and I move to adjourn further debate.

(1445)

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the hon. member for Rosthern that second reading debate on Bill No. 11, The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 1997, be now adjourned.

The motion is lost and debate continues.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments about Bill No. 11 today and be able to I think get a better understanding of where Bill No. 11 was when the Assembly looked at it in 1993, and in terms of the proposed amendments that we see coming before us now.

Mr. Speaker, the drawing of fair and equitable constituency boundaries is one of the most important aspects of our electoral system and we have to ensure that the rules governing the creation of those boundaries are fair to everyone in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the main point of Bill No. 11 is to change the requirement of drawing . . . of redrawing the boundaries in Saskatchewan every five years. Under Bill 11, that requirement will be increased to 10 years, and from our perspective, that's acceptable. Because, Mr. Speaker, people should know at least from one election to the next where they're voting and who they're voting for. By re-jigging our constituency boundaries every five years, there is little certainty from one election to the next. Towns switch from constituency to constituency with each successive election.

Mr. Speaker, I might note that in the Canora-Pelly constituency there are residents who have been in three different provincial constituencies in the last three elections. It is a situation that causes confusion for voters and it's a situation that doesn't allow voters to become familiar with their elected members.

I think that's especially true now that the requirement that total constituency populations for the 56 southern ridings be within plus or minus 5 per cent of the provincial average — excluding the two northern constituencies. Such a small variance, Mr. Speaker, may require the boundary commission to make constant changes at the time of redistribution to follow shifting population patterns, meaning some areas may find themselves in significantly altered constituencies every time we hold an election.

Changing the boundaries every 10 years, again, Mr. Speaker, will lessen this confusion somewhat and form at least some stability between the people and the elected MLA for a couple of terms. At the very least it'll allow the people to know what constituency they are in.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of constituency boundaries has been a very contentious one over the last two administrations with one party accusing the other of rigging the system in its favour. Of course when any political party misuses its authority and rigs the electoral system, it taints the process that brought each and every one of us here to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think either of the two parties that have been in power in Saskatchewan over the last 20 or 25 years are completely guilt free when it comes to adopting laws that were or are to their political advantage. And when parties take advantage of their position to tilt the system in their favour, it only adds to the cynicism of the voters.

I think we saw the fruition of such cynicism in the last election, Mr. Speaker, where voter turnout fell to an almost historic low. In some ridings voter turnout in 1995 barely topped 50 per cent. In Prince Albert Northcote for instance, Mr. Speaker, only 52 per cent of the eligible voters actually cast a ballot. In Saskatoon Fairview, only 51 per cent voted. I think these are telling statistics, Mr. Speaker.

When people lose faith in their electoral system, we have a real problem on our hands. And we have to do everything in our power to ensure that faith is re-instilled in them. Obviously this growing cynicism has found its roots beyond the electoral system and The Constituency Boundaries Act, but it is one important element.

Mr. Speaker, when this Act was amended in 1993, the government stated its intentions were: one, to bring the population variances between constituencies closer to a province-wide norm; and two, reduce the number of seats in the legislature. And of course at the time it was sold to the people of Saskatchewan as a step forward for democracy and a great saver of money.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, it was merely a coincidence that every one of the seats that had to be enlarged and every one of the seats that disappeared were in rural Saskatchewan, whereas the NDP's traditional political strength lies in the cities. Call me cynical, but I think this may have had more to do with the changes at the time than any noble purposes by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, our democratic system dictates, of course, that we do stick closely to the principle of one person, one vote. However, throughout the history of our country and our province, exceptions have been made to allow citizens to have the same type of effective, personal representation regardless of geography.

At the national level we see wide, wide disparities between the populations of ridings from province to province. And these exceptions were made to provide all citizens with adequate representation. In fact the federal system has actually given our province more seats than is warranted by our population. If a strict one person, one vote system was adopted federally, Saskatchewan would have 11 seats in parliament as opposed to the 14 we do have currently. And of course exceptions are rightly made right here in our provincial system as well.

The two northern seats do not even come close to the provincial average in population, and nor should they. However, we as a province have decided that the area is simply too large to be adequately represented by a single member. Even at the current size, it must be very difficult for the two members from the North to get around their entire constituency to talk with those they represent personally. So it's quite reasonable to suggest that because of geography we have to make these exceptions.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that there are areas in southern Saskatchewan that also fit this description. There are some ridings in rural Saskatchewan that have also grown to immense proportions. You need only look at constituencies like

Wood River or Cypress Hills or Thunder Creek to realize how difficult it must be for an MLA to get around the constituency regularly. And these are only a few of the examples.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, we have to keep in sight the tenet of one person, one vote, as much as possible. But as well, I think we must also recognize there are more things that go into equality than simply numbers. Equality of population cannot be our only goal.

When constituencies grow to such immense proportions, especially those we see in our south-west and southern regions, one has to question whether the people in those ridings are being treated equally with those from those constituencies that are more manageable in size.

And yes, I've heard the arguments that with the advent of superior communication tools, such as the fax machines and the cellular telephones, representing larger areas is now far more possible than it once was. To be certain . . . to a certain extent, that of course is true.

But I would point out to the members opposite that even the invention of the cellular telephone is of no help in those areas where there is no cellular service. To a large extent those unserved areas mirror precisely Saskatchewan's larger constituencies. I reiterate that population variances are allowed in other provinces, at the federal level, and even right here in Saskatchewan.

While I am not advocating and will never advocate overwhelming unfairness in terms of constituency population, I do maintain that in certain cases in southern Saskatchewan we should look beyond strict population when drawing our electoral boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the existing Act contains quite a bit of confusion. The minister in charge of this Bill, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, states that much of this confusion has come about because of an error in the 1993 legislation. In section 14, the term, voter population, is used instead of total population in subsection (1). And section 5 of the Bill before us today moves to correct that so-called mistake. The minister says it was a mistake, and judging from the incompatibility of this section with the rest of the Act, I will accept him at his word.

But none the less, I think the whole notion of voter population versus total population is a very interesting one. Because as we all know, in each of our ridings we represent a certain number of people who are not eligible voters. Whether they're under the age of 18 or whether they're not yet Canadian citizens, there are a certain number of people who aren't allowed to vote.

They're our constituents, to be sure, and deserve every bit as much attention, but they are not eligible voters. So the question comes up, when we're discussing this issue, whether we should base our formula on total population or on voter population. Obviously the government has decided now on total population. Back in 1993, no one was quite sure because of the ambiguity in the legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing *Hansard* from 1993, I didn't see where this rather glaring ambiguity was brought up by either the government or the official opposition of the day, which surprises me because it sticks right out there for all to see today. However, that's neither here nor there when we're looking at 1997, Mr. Speaker.

The question I think we should ask though is, what is the right population base to use in our electoral system? In time this will cause wide variations because voter population in some ridings . . . between voter populations in some ridings. In looking over the Chief Electoral Officer's report done after the 1995 elections, I think we're only just beginning on that path. I believe the true extent of this pattern will be seen in greater detail the next time we redraw the electoral map.

For the most part, in 1995, the voter population of most ridings, rural or urban, were fairly consistent. With some exceptions of course, as has already been noted. For the most part, ridings have voter populations around 11,000 people.

In researching this issue, I've heard arguments from both sides of the fence. Those who argue that total population is the fairest do so on the basis that you represent everyone in your constituency equally, even if they're under-age or are not eligible voters for whatever reason. And that's true, Mr. Speaker. However, there is another side to the story.

When you look at the demographics of Saskatchewan, it's pretty clear that areas outside of our two larger cities are growing older quickly. As young families leave rural areas, the density of people under 18 increases in the cities while it falls in rural areas and smaller cities and towns.

There are examples of some variations in voter population already, Mr. Speaker, as pointed out by my colleagues. However I contend it's something we're going to be seeing a lot more significantly down the road. As rural areas continue to age and a higher and higher percentage of children are found in the cities, we're going to begin seeing a lot more voters in rural ridings than in urban seats. Yes, the total population may remain relatively equal; however voter population will not.

And I think it's a very, very important point, Mr. Speaker, because obviously at election time, we as political candidates must seek out eligible voters for their support. Is it fair that candidates in one riding may have to seek, in the future, probably 13 or 14,000 voters while those in another riding may only have to seek out 9 or 10,000?

(1500)

I don't think there's any arguing that that's where we're headed, unless we see a huge shift away from current demographic trends. While I would be thrilled if such a trend reversal occurred and more of our young people stayed in their home towns to raise their families, I don't expect that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

And of course I'm also concerned that if total populations continue to fall in certain areas, the size of constituencies

outside of the cities will just keep getting larger and larger. I don't think this is good for our system and I don't think it's good for those who we represent.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure our electoral system remains fair, but we must also be wary of putting into place a system that is so rigid it creates another type of unfairness for some Saskatchewan residents.

The people we represent are not simply numbers in a formula. They have real issues, real concerns. And they expect their system to allow them adequate representation no matter what part of Saskatchewan they happen to live in.

Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 12

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 12 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to make a few comments today, Mr. Speaker, in regards to what I see in the Bill in sort of a legal sense, but I think there's a bigger question that should be answered here before this goes further.

The Bill itself, when I take a look at section 47(2), what it's really doing is in a sense taking any of the risk away from the lenders. The banks, they have the ability to go out and make the profit, loan the amount of monies that, you know, any feeder association is going to require, and perhaps expand to who knows how large. And yet it's really the taxpayers who are put at risk. And that's our role in here in the legislature — to ensure that the taxpayers of the province are looked after, and not any one organization or group.

And what concerns me about this one section is that perhaps what's really happening is that the taxpayers are being . . . taking all the risk. The banks are in a position where they can reap all the rewards. And there's no due diligence. I mean there's nothing in here . . . because of this one clause where the lender, if they had not reasonably have known that there was going to be something untoward happening with the loan, with the money, with the guarantee, they're not at risk — the taxpayers are. That is of course one large concern and it should be for the taxpayers of this province who are having to pick up, you know, these costs.

And the other section that I had read that is a concern is section 50(10) of the Bill. And this one has to do with the liens that are put on, Mr. Speaker. And I guess the one concern that really comes out here is whether or not there is enough notice given to those, you know, custom operators as far as what their loan . . . or their lien status, I should say, really is.

Now because they're deemed as custom operators and they

have to follow the rules and procedures put out by the provincial supervisor, they then know of course that they fall under the Act for dealing with these commodities and cattle.

But what assurance do they have . . . or what knowledge should they have that in fact they would lose their lien if they weren't the ones to make a written statement, an agreement with the association, you know, the custom operator and the association? But the custom operator would lose his lien right if he didn't have that statement early on. And perhaps what's missing here in this one section is any notification that perhaps the custom operator should be given about what status his lien would be at.

Now having said that, I mean the Bill and the amendments to it are fairly short, to the point. And we'll deal with a lot of this stuff once it reaches Committee of the Whole. But I think the bigger question that we've got to ask ourselves here today is not whether or not the legalese is correct in the Bill but whether or not the debate should surround the details of this legislation, or whether the debate should be whether a government should be putting Saskatchewan taxpayers' money at risk for such a program at all and . . . or in this manner.

And let's think back at what's happened here in the last years. And I believe this came about in the '70s where we had a plan by the Blakeney government at that time. It was called the beef stabilization plan, Mr. Speaker, and probably what . . . You know the intent is always good; that we were going to end up with a much larger feeding operation; that we're going to, with that, get large slaughterhouses and all the spin-off jobs that surround this. But when we take a look at what happened with the beef stabilization plan, I would have to ask the minister to show me where the benefits really were for the province. Did we have any?

And that's not to say we shouldn't have tried. I'm not saying that at all. But were there benefits there? And I think in the end that's why that plan was scrapped. There were some abuses to the plan; it was very lucrative to many. And did it increase our livestock operations or feeding operations? Well, no.

After that came the Devine government, and they had a hundred dollar a head cash advance. And we all know how that fell flat, because they would have supervisors or inspectors go out into the farms and ranches and they found out that in fact what was happening — there weren't any cattle, and there wasn't any money left either. So that fell flat.

We've had a period of time where, you know, governments of different stripes have tried to get Saskatchewan to a point where they're seen, I guess, in North America as large-scale feed operators. And I just don't think that the taxpayers have benefited for what they've put out in terms of risk and in terms of monies. They haven't seen any benefits.

And now what we've got is government-backed loans. And if the minister had taken the time, if the minister had taken the time to talk with many in the industry to find out the problems, and in fact talk to his own supervisors and find out the problems that have been associated with some of these

government-backed loans, and the numerous scams that were associated around some of these loans . . . and there were; there were many. We've heard all kinds of this from industry people.

And there again, is it something that we should be into? I'm not saying that we shouldn't try and help an industry; but if there's obviously, after 15 or, I guess, 20-some years, no benefit, I think we've got to rethink what we're doing.

Let's be serious. Let's take a look at our province. And nobody more than I would love to see large-scale feeder cattle operations in the south-west, in my own constituency. But, you know, in Saskatchewan we have a harsh climate. And who knows better than the people there, after a seven-month winter, Mr. Speaker. She's been a long one. But you know what that means? These harsh climates, these really cold winters, we're putting through a lot of expensive feed through these animals.

On the other hand, what we have in Alberta is real large-scale feeder operations. And with that we're also seeing some of the world's largest slaughter operations being brought in. When you go south to Calgary, you talk to some industry people that go south to Calgary, and what they're finding is . . . they've nicknamed it feeder alley on the one highway.

So is it up to Saskatchewan, is it the role of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, to try and compete with this? Because I don't think we can. I think what we've had here in Saskatchewan . . . we have a lot of farm-family operations that have mixed some grain, cow-calf operations. Why wouldn't we really try and do well where we can do well?

We've got a lot of marginal land. I know in the south half of the province there's marginal land that was broke up, put into crop. And I won't go too far down that road today, Mr. Speaker, but we all know the problems that we're having in transportation of grain product today. Perhaps a program to join with the federal government; I know they've had permanent-cover programs before.

But let's expand some of these ideas. Or some of the areas up in the North where, you know, it's late season; they can't get some of those areas seeded up in the bush. They can raise a lot of cattle, thousands and thousands of cattle. But do it in the cow-calf operation where it's still basically run on the family farm, and supply these slaughterhouse or feeding operations in Alberta, instead of putting all this taxpayers' money at risk to try and compete, Mr. Speaker.

So really I think the question is much larger here today. It's not so much the details of the Bill, it's whether or not we should have the program at all. Whether or not we should be looking at putting . . . if there is Saskatchewan taxpayers' money going to be put at risk, are we putting it in the right program with this?

And I'm going to actually ask for a meeting with the minister to have this discussion before the Bill goes much further, to see whether or not there's some common ground; that perhaps we can go in an entirely different direction. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 25 — The Gas Licensing Amendment Act, 1997

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce the officials first.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On my left is Brij Mathur, ADM (assistant deputy minister) in the department; and right behind Brij is Nick Surtees, executive director; and behind me is Perry Erhardt, legislation officer in the Department of Municipal Government.

(1515)

Clause 1

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

Just as we get into this, and I have a few questions on this Act amendment, I'd like to make kind of a comment on what our concerns are, Madam Minister, and then if you'll bear with me for a few minutes, we'll get into a few of the questions.

In recent years there have been a few dangerous gas pipeline fractures across Canada. These spectacular explosions are extremely threatening to nearby communities, homes, livestock, and the surrounding area.

As the minister is well aware, Saskatchewan has hundreds of pipelines stretching across our landscape, and as a result the safety of nearby residents must be the foremost priority. In fact just a couple of years ago there was a gas line explosion just west of Regina right along the highway. People standing over a mile away from the billowing smoke and flame could still feel the heat coming in waves. Even though the explosion was near Grand Coulee, the flames rising hundreds of feet into the air could be seen from Regina.

This incident caused grave concern for emergency crews and crews from SaskEnergy, who worked for hours on the scene until the remainder of the gas in this section of pipeline could be burnt off. Homes within a few miles of the explosion had to be evacuated. I also think officials may have even shut down a school in a nearby community for the day.

Fortunately, Madam Minister, no one was injured during the accident. Fortunately the toxins that were released into the air from the explosion were not significant enough to pose a serious threat to the environment. But if the explosion had occurred a little closer to a nearby farm, or even for that matter closer to the edge of Regina, the results could have been much, much different.

This is just one example of a problem with an underground gas pipeline but it clearly demonstrates that the safety standards and maintenance of gas pipelines in Saskatchewan cannot be taken

lightly. The potential for a disaster is tremendous if the highest standards of safety, maintenance, and materials are not applied.

Mr. Chairman, although the initial amendment contained within Bill 25 makes quite a minor change to allow for technicians other than a professional gas fitter to do a painting or cleaning of the gas pipelines, I have some serious concerns about the amendments which will give cabinet the authority to unilaterally change the regulations relating to The Gas Licensing Act.

Nearly every piece of legislation that this government has pushed through the House during the past two years contains a provision that allows cabinet more authority to unilaterally change regulations. This legislative technique clearly allows the government members to chip away at the real democratic power of this House. By using this technique, the NDP government is taking away the power of public scrutiny that should be offered in this Assembly whenever major legislative changes are proposed.

But the amendment contained within Bill 25 will allow cabinet the power to make changes to The Gas Licensing Act without any consultation with the industry and the public that may be directly affected by future changes. I believe that as elected members of this House, we must make every effort to ensure that the interests of the public are best served by the legislative changes. I do not believe that handing over more regulatory power to the NDP government does serve the best interest of the people we are all here to represent.

Furthermore, I do not believe that the secretive regulation changes concerning The Gas Licensing Act are necessary and could potentially compromise public safety in the long run. And if government proceeds with legislative changes that have not been received with the proper consultation and input . . . I know that this is a very real possibility, and it just recently happened with the fiasco over regulations changes to The Labour Standards Act which changed the rules regarding payment of some types of child care workers.

Unfortunately there are countless examples where the government implements legislative changes behind closed doors, away from the eyes of the public. And it is the people of Saskatchewan who pay the price for the government's mistakes. However before I get to that, I would like the minister to explain exactly what non-related safety-related activities are included under the maintenance of gas pipelines.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — I'm not sure whether the member mis-spoke himself in those very last words where he talked about gas pipelines. And I recognize the seriousness of the situation that the member outlined earlier, and of course these incidents are not to be taken lightly by anyone, but these events are far, far beyond the scope of this Act or this amendment.

Most of the kind of pipelines that the member refers to would be interprovincial or trans-Canada or cross national borders. Regulation of those would come under the purview of the Department of Energy and Mines and would in most cases be federally regulated and not subject, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to

provincial legislation.

Further, on the member's comments with respect to increasing the power, if you like, of government or elected people. In regulations this is becoming a standard clause, not to give more power, which is not what this does, but to provide more flexibility so that if in consultations, for instance, with the industry it is seen that some amendments could modernize the regime, then there is the ability to do that in regulations.

And while it's . . . while regulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not required to be brought to the House, nothing, nothing can ever be accomplished in regulation that supersedes the intent of the original Act. And so the reference to regulations is simply to provide a responsiveness of the government, more flexibility. Because when the sessions of the legislature are only held once a year, sometimes things change.

And in response to that, maybe in response to a request from the industry, you might want to make some changes in the regulations. But I repeat, nothing can ever be accomplished through regulation that is not contemplated or allowed for in the legislation. So there's nothing secretive about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's simply the way governments at the federal and provincial levels work.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister, but I'm afraid I disagree with you when it comes to regulations, because I believe there's much more power within those regulations than you're letting on.

And I would like to comment on one other thing you said, and you made a good point. That when we only sit once a year that's it's . . . I realize it is hard to not come out with regulations because some things need attending oftener than the one year. So that's actually a better reason that we should be sitting in the fall and in the spring. So I would hope you would carry that message back to the Premier. We would back you on that one 100 per cent, Madam Minister. We agree with you there.

I'm not sure, when we go back to what you were talking about in your answer there, maybe we didn't communicate well here. But I'd like to know, who decides what types of maintenance of gas pipelines fit into the non-safety-related category?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to have some clarification from the member. He keeps referring to gas pipelines. Now I'm not sure what he's talking about. This legislation covers domestic and commercial installations in buildings from the meter forward. And so the term pipelines — gas pipelines — I think doesn't properly . . . is not the proper reference here. This concerns the regulation from the meter onwards or forward of the integrity of the gas system. And it's meant to, by removing the word "maintenance" to make the distinction between work that needs to be done by a qualified gas fitter or gas installer, and such routine procedures as the cleaning or painting or changing the filter in an appliance.

So while it is a line, it's part of a system. But when he refers to pipelines, he leaves the impression that this legislation has a

much larger scope to the distribution system, which it does not.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, we maybe . . . our communication here was not that well, and maybe I was not getting the understanding of what we were talking about. But can you explain then what lines are actually . . . Are we talking inside buildings only? Are we not talking outside of buildings to do with any of the gas fittings at all?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would vary on the application, but basically we're always talking about the apparatus or the system which is beyond the meter; no part of the distribution system that is ahead of the meter. It's only from the meter on. Now some of it may be inside; some of it may be outside. As the member will appreciate, in a house for example, you have your meter, and basically the gas lines that go to the consuming appliances are mostly on the inside.

If you had a larger installation like a farmyard, a greenhouse operation, an industrial operation, there might be a number of buildings for instance that were served in that complex which were all beyond the meter. So some of the gas line that serves appliances there might be outside, underground, some of it might be inside. But it's always . . . what we're talking about here and what this legislation is confined to is the system that serves the gas consuming appliances that are beyond the meter. So it's between the meter and the burner, if you like. It's that part and that part only.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister. Now I think we know we're coming from the same spot here. Grain dryers, I would presume though, would come under this amendment, would they not? Because they are after the meter.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Grain dryers and any kind of a gas consuming appliance, and the gas line from that appliance back to the meter, are covered by this legislation.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Now correct me again if I'm wrong here and getting a misinterpretation of what we're talking about, but up to this point, before you put the amendment forth, I presume that someone . . . or the person providing the maintenance or painting or whatever it be of these lines — whether they're after the meter — did that person have to have a licence before, and now what we're talking about is that this person does not have to be licensed?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the situation was that a person, a serviceman doing that kind of work, the kind that we talked about — cleaning, painting, so on — would not have had to be licensed as a gas fitter. But because of the language in the Act there was some confusion and so that is simply what we're addressing here, through the removal of the word maintenance, is to clarify what the roles are and what the requirements are for the serviceman engaging in that work.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I would presume then that what this would also do is that it would make it somewhat cheaper then to maintain these lines now that we realize who can and who cannot do the maintenance?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well of course normally to engage a service person who has a qualification that meets journeyman standards, or standards in the trade, would be more expensive than a serviceman. But that of course is something that's decided by the market-place.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does this legislation that we are talking about now coincide with our neighbouring provinces like Alberta, Manitoba, or for that matter across the country? Is this a standard piece of legislation?

(1530)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm told that in jurisdiction . . . that this is pretty well standard within jurisdictions that do regulate. And that the use of the word maintenance is superfluous because installation, alteration, you know, the other terms that are used, would be all-encompassing, and that the use of the word maintenance is not required. It causes confusion and that's why we're amending the Act to remove it.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Being that this Bill does not have . . . is not a very lengthy one, I think that's all the questions I have at this time, although I will be introducing an amendment to it in clause 5.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 5

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd now like to formally move the following amendment, and the amendment is that reads:

Amend clause 5 of the printed Bill by deleting the words "on assent" and substituting the words "upon consideration and acceptance by the Committee of the Whole of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly of regulations proposed pursuant to clauses 25(a) and (a.1) of *The Gas Licensing Act* as being enacted by section 4 of this Act".

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to stand in my place to speak against this amendment. The member . . . I will outline the procedure for the benefit of the member.

What happens in the development or changes of regulations is that, say for instance someone in industry brings forward a request for an amendment to the regulations which makes them more modern, or easier to apply, or whatever the reason might be. Then the department would review that.

If they felt that it had . . . They would have to feel that it would have merit before they would propose the amendment which would then go to a committee of cabinet called the legislative

. . . or the Regulations Review Committee. The Regulations Review Committee is, as I said, a committee of cabinet, chaired by a cabinet minister, with staff and resource people from the Department of Justice and the relevant department that's requesting the change in regulations.

The merit of the change is debated, and if it is seen to be a positive, then drafting instructions are given to make that change. The members opposite should not be paranoid about this process. It is absolutely necessary to have regulations apart . . . to have a more flexible procedure for changes in regulations, as distinct from legislation.

But what the members opposite need to understand and appreciate is that you cannot accomplish anything by regulation which is not contemplated in the legislation. That is a safety feature. That is the feature of the whole scheme that makes government accountable, that makes the members of this House accountable, is that if the legislation is crafted with care, the legislation cannot be amended without coming to this House. And you can't . . . no government can achieve anything by regulation that they can't achieve through legislation. So there is no reason to be suspicious of this process.

Therefore we could not be placed in the position — no government could be placed in the position where they would have to come before the Legislative Assembly to change every little tit and tattle of regulations through the whole governance scheme. So we have to oppose this amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, then I'm afraid we're going to have to agree to disagree because this is one of our main bones of contention with this House and the way it works right now. More and more things are being done by regulation. And you can minuscule the amount of legislation that is done, and the intent of the legislation that is done by regulation, but it is still being done and not being done in the House here where it should be debated.

The division bells rang from 3:37 p.m. until 3:45 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 12

Krawetz	McPherson	McLane
Gantfoer	Osika	Bjornerud
Belanger	Hillson	Aldridge
D'Autremont	Toth	Hepner

Nays — 27

Van Mulligen	Wiens	Atkinson
Johnson	Whitmore	Goulet
Lautermilch	Upshall	Kowalsky
Renaud	Calvert	Pringle
Koenker	Trew	Bradley
Scott	Teichrob	Serby
Stanger	Murray	Wall

Kasperski Ward Sonntag
 Jess Langford Thomson

Madam Minister, in your introduction of the Bill you stated, and I quote — and please bear with me as I will be quoting you at some length:

Clause 5 agreed to.

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I would ask the permission of the committee to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the members for that kindness. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly, two guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. And I would draw the members' attention to Ms. April Bahr and Mr. Chris Miller. These are two students from Thom Collegiate who are here to do a research project on members of the Legislative Assembly. And I would ask all members to make them feel very welcome here today, and to thank them for taking time out of their schedule after school to work on this project. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 25 (continued)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I report the Bill, No. 25 of 1997, without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 39 — The Multiculturalism Act

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On my left, the ADM, Brij Mathur, who I've introduced previously; and the senior policy consultant in the cultural area, Margaret Morrissette.

Clause 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A House business and research memo dated March 21, 1997, in the summary of The Multiculturalism Act 1997, claims that the new Act proposes to, quote: "replace the outdated Saskatchewan Multicultural Act, 1974."

Let the record show that it is our belief that this is incorrect. This Act repeals the Saskatchewan multiculturalism Act, 1978 and replace it with a new and presumably updated version that reflects changes that have occurred in the multicultural field over a period of 19 years.

Adoption of this legislation will lay the groundwork for developing progressive multiculturalism legislation in Saskatchewan.

I am decidedly interested in pursuing with you, during the clause-by-clause examination, your plans and timetable for the future development of progressive multicultural legislation. You have my unqualified support in such an undertaking. You claim, and I quote:

A new Multiculturalism Act will continue to support cultural retention, heritage languages, and inter-cultural understanding.

This is certainly fine in theory, but what about in practice and on the ground? Again, during the clause-by-clause statements, I may ask you to outline the practical, concrete steps you plan to take to make this a reality. Again I quote you:

The Multiculturalism Act, 1997, Mr. Speaker, will encourage respect for the multicultural heritage of Saskatchewan and encourage the continuation of our multicultural society.

Many questions remain and the most primary one is, how are you planning to ensure the respect for, and the continuation of multicultural society in terms of the many cuts and challenges they face in the future? Moral suasion only goes so far. You state, and I quote:

Further, Mr. Speaker, The Multiculturalism Act will define the role of the minister responsible in ensuring the development of (the) multiculturalism policy.

Again, during clause-by-clause examination of ministerial powers, I'll ask you — and may ask you — to elaborate on the steps you as a minister will take to ensure development of multiculturalism policy within and outside of government.

Finally — I won't quote you again — you say at the end of your introduction of the Bill:

It will begin to develop a framework for multiculturalism policy for the province of Saskatchewan, policy which also addresses current concerns of our communities and including each of us in the scope of multiculturalism policy.

And that's the end of quotes, Madam Minister. The intent of the Act is commendable and the wording pushes all the right buttons. In the end though the question is, what does the new Bill do that the old one did not do? It is not readily apparent with what clause faults or wrongs the Bill corrects or overcomes. I am concerned that the Bill will live up to its good intentions, and it's not clear how it will. Certainly talk is cheap and the proof is in the pudding. The Bill does away with the Saskatchewan multicultural council, and with the making of

grants by the council for multicultural purposes.

Presently, multiculturalism is funded from the lotteries; generally he who paid the piper calls the tune. There are no provisions in this legislation for funding of any sort. Without the Saskatchewan multicultural advisory council and without any funding commitments, how do you expect to carry any clout or wield any influence in the multicultural community with legislation of this sort?

Other than high-blown rhetoric, what resources will you as the minister bring to bear to support this Bill? And, Madam Minister, actions speak louder than words when it comes to the multicultural community. And I'll certainly invite the minister to comment on some length on these questions and issues I raise.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to respond to the comments of the member opposite.

First of all though I would like to introduce to you and through you to other members in the House, four representatives of the multicultural community who are here in the gallery today, in the west gallery, to observe the debate on the Bill.

There is Lydia Chatto — she's on the board of the Saskatchewan Organization of Heritage Languages; Dr. John Newton, a board member of the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan; Martha Mettle, office administrator of the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan; and Heather Rude, the program director of the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan.

So I'd like to ask all members to join with me in welcoming our guests into the Chamber today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Now in response to the questions of the member from Athabasca, I'd just like to say first that the old Act, the old provincial Act, provides a very limited definition of multiculturalism as the right of different communities to preserve their distinct cultures and to share them with others. The member is right in his observation that the original legislation was passed in 1974. There was an amendment in 1978, but this new legislation doesn't amend the 1974 legislation, it actually replaces it. So it has more, much more impact than the measures that were taken in 1978.

Then I'd like to add as well that the proposed legislation addresses those issues of cultural retention, inter-cultural understanding, but it goes further to promote the learning of languages, to promote anti-racism, cultural expression, equity, and immigrant settlement issues. So the scope of multiculturalism has been expanded to encompass social, economic, and human rights issues.

The new legislation reflects these issues which the old 1974 legislation did not. And it's a serious statement of sociological principles.

When the member asks what will we do, we will continue to consult with members of the multiculturalism community on the various issues. But the Bill itself in section 5, as the member will have observed, lists six duties of the minister in the context of this legislation which will ensure that when carried out in concert with members of the multicultural community, that plans of action can be developed on each and every one of the issues based upon the priorities that the multicultural community identifies.

And we will work through those issues and make sure that multiculturalism policy is promoted throughout government departments and our communities through those action plans developed in concert with the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you. I think all members of the House are very appreciative of the various cultures and backgrounds which go into making up our great province. And I think we all recognize that the first nations heritage and the Metis heritage and aboriginal heritages generally are one of the ethnic mixes which has been traditionally undervalued in our province. And I think only recently are we coming to realize that one of our most important heritages is in fact our first one.

Another ethnic heritage I would like to mention briefly this afternoon, one of the more interesting ones in our province, near North Battleford, is the black heritage which has recently come to public attention for the publication of a new book, *Deemed Unsuitable: the history of black settlement in the early days of the homestead period*.

(1600)

And I think it's particularly important because I think oftentimes we have been guilty, as those of European backgrounds, of thinking of persons of colour as being new immigrants. Well some of them are new Canadians, but the black settlements around Maidstone are a very old part of the homestead era of this province. And I think it's important that we recognize that there are indeed persons of colour in this province whose contributions go back to the early days of our province and have been part of the North Battleford story from the very earliest days of our community.

However I do have a question of the minister. In some circles, as the minister knows, multiculturalism has become unfashionable and unpopular. And as I see it, the challenges for multiculturalism, or the arguments against multiculturalism, are twofold, and I would ask the minister to address them for us.

The first is when we uphold our own background, our own heritage, the challenge for us is always to do that in a sense which one in no way declares our superiority to persons of other backgrounds. And so how do we show our pride in our heritage without in any way trying to detract or take something from persons of a different heritage? I think that's always a challenge that multiculturalism has to address.

And the other challenge in multiculturalism which has caused some people to criticize it is, how do we take pride in our distinctiveness and our differences while on the other hand in

no way try to remove ourselves from the fact that we are Canadians, we are Saskatchewanians, we are part of the larger community, part of the larger whole? And as you know, some people are critical that multiculturalism tends to emphasize what we have different from our neighbours as opposed to what binds us to our neighbours and to the larger community.

And please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying I subscribe to that philosophy, but I think these are the two challenges that multiculturalism must always address: one, pride in our heritage not detracting from the contributions of any other heritage; and two, pride in our heritage, our distinctiveness, that in no way detracts from our membership in the larger Saskatchewan and Canadian community.

I'd like her to address those philosophical matters if you would, Madam Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for his thoughtful questions and observations, and I think that our provincial motto "from many peoples, strength" sums up the philosophical approach in very few words very aptly.

He's mentioned the very important addition to this Act which was an important omission in the 1974 legislation, and just take this opportunity to correct . . . The member from Athabasca referred to an amendment in 1978 and I inadvertently agreed with him. But the only amendment to the '74 legislation was made in 1983 — just a technicality.

But the inclusion in the 1997 Multiculturalism Act, of aboriginal culture and some recognition that the first nations people's culture is to a great extent oral, . . . and recognizes that. Also there are, in the last census, 125 different countries of origin given by the citizens of Saskatchewan. So that is how diverse, really. This is 125 different countries and then in addition to that we have the diversity of our aboriginal people where there are many distinct groups and at least six different first nations languages spoken just in this province alone, that I'm aware of.

The member also mentions the black settlement, the people who came after the American Revolution. I had the opportunity to read that book, *Deemed Unsuitable*, written by Bruce Shepard, the current curator of the Diefenbaker centre in Saskatoon, and found it very interesting.

And again, so often when the term multicultural is used, people tend to think about . . . or many people do unfortunately think about only visible minorities. And we have to remember the diversity of this province and the many countries that people come from.

So the express purposes of the new Act are to recognize that the diversity of Saskatchewan people with respect to race, cultural heritage, religion, ethnicity, ancestry, and place of origin is a fundamental characteristic and always has been, of Saskatchewan society, or has been ever since it's begun to be settled, which isn't really that long in relative terms. We're so young; not even a hundred years old as a province, where some

civilizations in the world are many thousands of years old.

But that it is a fundamental characteristic of Saskatchewan society that enriches the lives of all Saskatchewan people. It's to encourage respect for the multicultural heritage of Saskatchewan and to foster a climate for harmonious relations among people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds without sacrificing their distinctive cultural and ethnic identities.

And I think that addresses the comments that the member was making about, how do you highlight as one group the characteristics of your culture without taking away from or detracting from that of others.

So I think that truly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were in the forefront in Canada, being the first provincial government in 1974 to pass multicultural legislation. And we are in the forefront again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that our new legislation that's before us today is the only such in Canada that does recognize aboriginal people and their culture, and that is as proactive in promotion and development as this piece of legislation is. I think it's a great day, really, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, as I see it — and I'd be interested in knowing if you agree — I see basically three major groupings in terms of the cultures which make up our province; obviously each has many sub-groupings within it: (1) the aboriginal; (2) the heritage cultures, that is, those of us who are now third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation Saskatchewan but we still remember what our original roots were; but they are no longer personal roots but there is still a sentimental attachment to the initial . . . the initial land from which our ancestors came; and (3) those new Canadians who still continue to have personal and individual ties with their country of origin.

It strikes me that in terms of multiculturalism, that each of these groups has a different focus and different needs. I wonder if you agree with me on those three . . . those three broad groupings; that that's a valid observation. And if their needs are addressed separately. Say the Ukrainian community which is now approximately a hundred years old here, and of course the persons of Ukrainian origin, their ties, they are no longer personal and individual, versus those who may possibly have been born in another land. Thank you.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it's important to think of it this way. That a multicultural society in Saskatchewan includes every citizen of Saskatchewan. It includes us all. And I think . . . I don't really agree with the classification, the groupings that the member opposite suggests. Because I'm not sure whether you've had the opportunity yet — to the member from Battleford — as a member of the legislature, to receive and respond to an invitation to attend one of the many citizenship courts that takes place around our province on a regular basis.

And I never cease to be amazed, when I attend one of those citizenship courts, that, say out of 70 or 80 people that are qualifying for citizenship at that particular court, that there

might be 20 or 30 countries of origin from all over the world and embracing every race, religion, culture, from every part of the globe. And this is taking place on a regular basis in all the centres throughout our province.

And I often think . . . I always go away from those events feeling so fortunate to be a Canadian by accident of birth. And I often think that these people, in order to qualify for citizenship, have to undergo a course of education and a very rigorous examination. And I sometimes think that those of us who are Canadians by birth should be required to take that examination periodically, and maybe if we can't pass it we should be deported — I don't know who would want us.

But I really think that sometimes we have so much that we take for granted. And people come here for so many different reasons. So many . . . of course some people come here as refugees, but many people have made huge sacrifices in terms of leaving family and material possessions, and all kind of things that we might value, behind in order to enjoy freedom of expression, freedom of religion, all of the freedoms that we treat sometimes very cavalierly; where other people struggle so hard in their own countries to achieve that. And sometimes when they can't, they come to Canada looking for that instead.

And when you talk about groupings, I think . . . I want to give you an interesting statistic. And this is a personal anecdote in a way. But recently I was told by someone in authority who knows about these things, that in the Canadian census, one after the other, the only ethnic . . . or race that is increasing in Saskatchewan is German. They're the third-largest ethnic group. And I thought to myself — he made this statement — and I thought, well there isn't a lot of immigration from Germany. I very seldom, when I go to citizenship court, see new immigrants from Germany.

So what is the cause of this? So I asked him what it was. And he said it was — and I can relate to this — if you want to talk . . . Sometimes people look at me as a white person and say, how could you possibly know anything about racial discrimination?

Well just try being a young child in a Saskatchewan, small Saskatchewan town of Mennonite German ancestry in the Second World War where our family had left Germany generations before. Over a hundred years before they had come to Kansas and then up through Swift Current into Saskatchewan in the 1800s. And we had no connections whatsoever.

And yet our house — my grandmother's house because my father was engaged in the conflict in Europe; I was staying with my grandmother — her house was raided by the RCMP because she had some relatives in the 17th century in Germany who were writers, and they had bound books, which was quite rare for the 1700s, that were written by her ancestors. This was not subversive literature; this was poetry. This was philosophical literature. But it was seized and it was never returned.

And my sister and I, as frightened children seeing this happen, and it took . . . there was a stigma attached to being German in

the 1940s — from '39 to '45 — in Saskatchewan, as everywhere. And it's taken 50 years for people who changed their name from Schmidt to Smith or whatever to conceal that identity, it's taken them two generations, until the most recent census, to admit their ancestry.

And that's why this is a . . . it's a growing group. It's not growing; it's just that more people are acknowledging that that is their ancestry. Because now being far removed from those events, they now feel confident enough to talk about that.

(1615)

So that's just one example of how pervasive this kind of discrimination, and racism can be into the lives of ordinary people who are citizens of Canada, who always have been, who might think that they're immune from this kind of thing, where they're not.

And this is the kind of proactive approaches that we want to build, the kind of relationships that we want to build between all Saskatchewan people, and not to stratify certain groups at certain levels. We want every citizen of Saskatchewan to feel part of a progressive, multicultural community.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Just a few questions for the minister. I didn't take the opportunity to welcome your staff and I'd like to do that at this point in time, and also welcome the guests that are here today to view what we hope is a very short passage of this particular Bill.

When you assumed the multiculturalism portfolio, was it because you expressed a distinct interest in this portfolio? And how does the assignment work in terms of the Premier? Is it naturally attached to the portfolio of Municipal Government? And also, in light of the introduction of this Act and the work required to implement it, do you expect that you will continue to be responsible for the multicultural portfolio, given your insight on some of the importances of multiculturalism in the opening statement?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, not to be flippant about this, and I wouldn't want to be in the Premier's shoes, but the Premier of a provincial government selects his cabinet for whatever reasons he selects his cabinet, and the longevity of the minister is entirely his decision to make and nobody else ever knows.

But multiculturalism is part of the responsibilities of the cultural division of the Department of Municipal Government. And Municipal Government, the name of the department, is not very descriptive, I recognize, of the activities that are in it. But there really is the Municipal Government framework within that department. There is the cultural and recreation branches, and there is Sask Housing, and then of course as part of the regulatory, there is also the public safety issues. That's why my main claim to fame is having my name on the elevators. But

please don't call me to fix the ones in the legislature when they catch you between floors. But the public safety issues are part of that regulatory part.

So it's a very interesting and diversified portfolio. But the cultural has a permanent place in it, and it's been part of that department now since what was called the Family Foundation was disbanded in 1992 and all of those functions were moved into the department of then Community Services, now called Municipal Government.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just a quick point on the elevator point that you raised. My young daughter asked why every few months the names change on the elevator, and we indicated that in politics there is a lot of ups and downs.

The Chair: — Order, order. I must remind the members that we are no longer on clause 1. We are on clause 2 and all remarks must pertain to clause 2.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. How would the purposes of the Act arrived at and how do they differ from the purposes of the Act that it actually replaced, again given your insight into multiculturalism?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a very long history to these changes, and it's involved very committed efforts of a large number of people over the years.

Efforts began in the late 1980s, culminating in a 1989 report of a task force on multiculturalism which recommended new legislation. In 1990 government published what was called the Saskatchewan government response to the task force report. In 1993 the government received the recommendations of the minister's Advisory Committee on Multicultural Legislation and that provided the basic framework.

Then in January 1995, the then minister of Municipal Government released a discussion paper called *RESPONDING TO THE COMMUNITY: Proposals for Cultural Development*, which began a process of restructuring and rejuvenation of Saskatchewan's cultural community.

One of the seven recommendations listed in the document proposed undertaking public consultations in preparation for the new Saskatchewan multiculturalism legislation.

There were focus groups. Members opposite might be interested to know that 77 per cent of the respondents of the focus groups believed that the quality of life in Saskatchewan was strengthened by these efforts in multiculturalism; and 67 per cent believe that the government and its institutions should promote policies, programs, and practices that enhance the understanding and respect for the diversity of the people of Saskatchewan.

So I think that outlines for the member part of the process that

there's been. The proposed legislation addresses the broader issues of cultural retention, inter-cultural understanding, promotion of learning of languages, antiracism, cultural expression, equity, and immigrant settlement issues.

So the scope of multiculturalism has expanded to encompass social, economic, and human rights issues, and the new legislation reflects these issues.

I did forget to mention that within the department and the funding portion is responsibility for the lotteries, which funds the cultural and recreation, including, through the Saskatchewan . . . through the SCCO, the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations, obtains their funding from the lotteries.

Mr. Aldridge: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, with leave, to introduce a guest to the committee.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To you and through you to the rest of the folks assembled here this afternoon, I'd like to introduce to you a group of five grade 11 and 12 students from Herbert School. And they're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Marilyn Keaschuk, and chaperon, Ms. Janzen.

And we're running a little bit late here this afternoon, I understand, but I'm looking forward to meeting with you later after you've had your tour of the legislature. So we'll talk to you later. And everyone give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 39 (continued)

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And thank you to the minister for being here, and welcome to our guests as well.

In that particular clause there's a statement there that says:

It is the policy of the Government of Saskatchewan to:

- (a) support the continued development and expression of all cultures within the framework of democratic principles and the laws of Canada;

That last part about the framework almost sounds like a qualification. Was it your intention to say that democratic principles will in some way modify the multiculturalism policy?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we're interpreting this clause somewhat differently. I'd just like to read the whole clause:

4 (a) support the continued development and expression of all cultures within the framework of democratic principles and the laws of Canada;

Support refers to moral support and encouragement as well as providing for a potential financial support. And as newcomers arrive, the multiculturalism and cultural expression of Saskatchewan evolves. And this clause is meant to be a recognition of that and allow room for development within that framework.

Mr. Heppner: — We have a similar situation I think shows up in clause 4(d). It seems like a qualification. Aren't you working a bit at cross-purposes if you have a Bill that emphasizes individualism on one side and the importance of ethnic groups at the same time?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way I read clause (d), it doesn't speak to individual rights in a sense that the member opposite interprets. To "promote the full, free and equal participation of all individuals in Saskatchewan society." And I see that . . . my interpretation of that would be individuals acting as part of the whole with regard to their fellow citizens in the multicultural society that Saskatchewan is . . . (inaudible) . . . in that.

Mr. Heppner: — Just following up on that particular question, are we then to assume that every individual in Saskatchewan will be getting some assistance or help through this multicultural policy? If not, we've left someone out.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not what this Bill is about. Although we did make mention of how activities are funded through the proceeds of the lotteries and so forth. This legislation, like the previous legislation, supports, as we've said and as it spells out, promotion of learning of languages, promotion of issues that deal with racism and all of the other parts of the legislation that are referred to.

But it doesn't . . . In order to take part in a democratic system, the individuals have to have freedom to do that. Every citizen will benefit by the positive atmosphere that's created, but it certainly doesn't contemplate that there will be, for instance, grants given out to each individual or the sort of thing that I sense that the member opposite is leading to.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Moving on to clause 4(e), and that particular clause binds government to work in partnership with community groups to promote cooperation and understanding among cultures. Does this create any new duties for the government?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are . . . there is no new expenditure contemplated by this legislation.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Thank you. Moving on to the following one, which is clause 4(f), and that one brings up the

language issues. And as you know, it's a bit of a bone of contention about the voters in the province, if they should be dedicating resources to bilingualism in a province which has some fairly low language groupings. Will this clause extend the government's bilingualism efforts or will it provide similar linguistic rights to other language groups?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course this clause says in whole:

promote the official languages of Canada and recognize the many different languages spoken in Saskatchewan;

And we already do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in very many ways. In terms of the official languages of Canada, we recognize the . . . in this legislation we're recognizing the aboriginal languages of first nations people. We are, and continue to recognize that Canada is a bilingual country.

We know that many of the programs . . . We don't see this costing more money. But with some of the programs, for instance the francophone school issue where those costs are paid by the federal government in recognition that this is officially a bilingual country, then obviously we should be proactive in pursuing those opportunities and that funding on behalf of the francophone community. And it should recognize, as it says here, the many different languages spoken in Saskatchewan.

(1630)

And I think the member opposite will likely know, in his position as an educator, that we have one of the finest heritage language opportunities and . . . I hesitate to call it a structure. But it's really a volunteer system where volunteers who speak many different languages, teach and promote others on a volunteer basis, supported with some funding from the Department of Education but very . . . you would almost call it seed funding in relationship to the wonderful work that these volunteers do. And certainly in the context of this legislation, we would want to encourage that and expand that, because it's a very efficient way of achieving some progress — significant progress — in those areas.

But basically, we don't see the passage of this legislation costing, for instance, the taxpayers of Saskatchewan more money.

Mr. Heppner: — On the matter of languages — and you brought in the Department of Education — could you comment on the cooperation that's taking place presently between what your department is doing here and the Department of Education.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would respond to that that in this area, and probably largely because of the framework of legislation that we've had, that there's very good cooperation interdepartmentally between any of the agencies that are involved.

For instance, in the languages area there's good cooperation

between our department and the Department of Education. In the immigrant settlement area there's very good cooperation between our department and the Department of Social Services, for example, which helps to support the Open Door Societies, and the like. So there are examples throughout the piece, of very good cooperation between different government departments in this area.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. One question on 4(j) — 4(j) sets a general policy of . . . and I'll take it from the Act:

. . . administer services and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to a multicultural society.

Do you expect as a result of this clause that departments will issue policy guidelines to ensure that civil servants are acting in a politically correct manner with respect to multiculturalism?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this, as we do now, would be not only through hiring practices in the Public Service Commission, but throughout government. We continue to promote a cross-cultural education for employees, particularly those at the service level and a number of others that I think are proactive initiatives, to achieve the policies that are being promoted throughout the framework of this Bill.

And certainly we always do, and this government at large does, not just through the Public Service Commission but throughout, try to promote a recognition of the multicultural nature of the province of Saskatchewan and its people.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clause 4, certainly this clause is the meat and bones of the Act and contains 10 subclauses. And as you said when introducing the Bill: "It will begin to develop a framework for multiculturalism policy for the province of Saskatchewan." Again, my apologies for quoting you once again.

Madam Minister, a journey of 10,000 miles certainly starts with the first step and this Bill is just the beginning. I'm interested in, and all of us are interested in the subsequent steps that will bring us to a multicultural destination.

And each subclause begs a number of questions in terms of what specific actions, programs, policies do you contemplate as necessary for implementation of each clauses? What resources, staff, and funding do you envision as required? What are the key interest groups and stakeholders you will need to consult and cooperate with? What is your hoped-for end result? And what is your timetable for achieving the results?

These are some of the questions for all the different subclauses that we have. And just for the sake of time perhaps you can just kind of give us a quick overview of some of the clauses and some of the anticipated efforts that you want to undertake as minister.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, the Inter-Multicultural Committee is preparing a document for the government which will examine the potential

for consolidating multiculturalism, including funding, within one agency or structure — that's leading to the single arts agency.

We want to continue to communicate with and consult with representatives of the multicultural committees who were nominated from a broad representation of multicultural organizations. This committee is an examining of structure which would be open to the economic development of multicultural initiatives. It could include any number of initiatives originating from the community itself. And it would be up to the new funding structure board to work with the community, the three levels of government, the corporate sector, and the academic sector to develop further opportunities for multiculturalism, economic benefits that go beyond the current significant contributions made by multicultural festivals and so forth.

So we don't have a timetable. We have . . . enunciate some goals here. We work with the community, who identifies to us their priorities, because we can't of course have the, I guess, energy to move forward on all fronts at the same time, at the same intensity. So we listen to the community in terms of developing their priorities and then we move forward on those.

And I think that our past record shows that working together in that collaborative way that we have made considerable progress. So rather than having a timetable, we work with the community and work on their priorities as they become identified.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This clause spells out the powers that you and the subsequent multiculturalism ministers have at your disposal to carry out the intent and to implement the provisions of the multiculturalism policy.

Subclauses (a) and (b) are critical for wielding ministerial powers for the advancement of multiculturalism:

(a) review provincial legislation, policies and programs to determine if they reflect the multiculturalism policy; (and)

(b) monitor the efforts of departments, agencies and Crown corporations of the Government of Saskatchewan in performing their services and developing programs in accordance with the multiculturalism policy.

The vigorous and sustained exercise of these ministerial powers is key to the successful implementation of this legislation. I invite the minister to tell us her plans, timetable and methods for exercising the powers granted her in subclauses (a) and (b) to review legislation and monitor department and agency effort in compliance with The Multiculturalism Act of 1997. And I also want to take this opportunity to thank the minister and her staff for her efforts and her answers. Thank you.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clauses 6 and 7 agreed to.

The Committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 25 — The Gas Licensing Amendment Act, 1997

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

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

Bill No. 39 — The Multiculturalism Act

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

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

(1645)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Municipal Board Vote 22

The Chair: — I'll begin by inviting the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much. To my left is Mr. Graham McNamee, who is the chairman of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And right behind him is Marilyn Turamich, who is the secretary to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

Item 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, welcome to your officials.

Madam Minister, I believe every year the board identifies a list of priorities or goals to aim for. Could you maybe just give us a broad overview of what some of those goals are this coming year?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the mission of the broad goals of this Municipal Board are to ensure financial credibility for local authorities, and ensure that appeals respecting planning assessment, fire prevention, municipal boundary and property maintenance are heard fairly. That's in broad scope, Mr. Chairman, the mission.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I think with the reassessment coming to light, and I'm sure you agree with me, the amount of appeals, the number of appeals . . . I guess we have no idea how many there's going to

be out there but I would suggest there's going to be an awful lot.

If a person, say, for an RM (rural municipality) for an example, a taxpayer, a ratepayer out there decides he's going to appeal his assessment and goes before the local council and is turned down, so re-appeals and goes to the board of revision, what is the cost that will be charged that taxpayer at that point?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The answer to the question the member opposite has posed is that the fee to appeal to the provincial level, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, is \$50 per hundred thousand of assessment to a maximum per appeal of \$600.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. So if I understand that right then, I guess in a situation of a farmer for an example, if he appealed all his land — his land was valued at a million dollars for an example — the cost would be \$500. Is that right? Am I following that right? Like it's \$50 per hundred thousand of every hundred thousand of assessment that he is appealing?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — To a maximum of \$600 per appeal.

Mr. Bjornerud: — That's new for this year? That seems to me to be awfully high all of a sudden for anybody to appeal. Was that in there last year? Was that the same . . .

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — There has always been a fee to appeal and the fee is refundable upon a successful appeal. If the appellant does not succeed, obviously then that money is used to defray the costs of the system.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, maybe . . . and I touched on it before, the number of appeals and I'm sure your people must have . . . you must be trying to make some guess as to how many appeals you may have. I guess my question is, do you have any idea of the amount of appeals that will come in and are we going to be capable of handling the number of appeals that you feel that may come to the forefront?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — It's difficult to anticipate, but the estimate is from 3 to 5,000 appeals are expected to be filed. In anticipation of that, one full-time and eight part-time members have been added to the panel of members to hear appeals, and two additional clerical staff have also been secured for the reassessment period.

So there is . . . As a result of the lateness, if you like, because of the changeover and the difficulties that the municipalities are having obviously with meeting the deadlines, it's likely that appeals will be coming in later in the year as well.

So I think what is anticipated is right now the backlog, there is virtually no backlog, so the work is very current. And appeals won't come in until a bit later than average. So I would really anticipate that about this time next year the workload of the municipal government, Municipal Board, will be fairly onerous because they may still be dealing with late appeals from this year and early appeals from next. But they've tried to plan ahead to anticipate that as best as possible and to add the staff

so that appeals can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think I would say that I really feel for the people that are going to have to deal with these appeals this year because I think we all realize the situation we're in with reassessment and a number of the problems that have come to the forefront.

Madam Minister, how much money do you think . . . how much money do you plan to save with the passage of Bill No. 4 — The Municipal Board Amendment Act because of reducing the quorum number in order to hear appeals?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — In answer to the question, the intent of the changes to the legislation were not to save money but to make sure that there were members available to be empanelled so that appeals could be dealt with in a more timely way, and to reduce the amount of travel required for appellants. So the answer is we really don't expect it to save any money. We just expect it to be more responsive.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, how many members do we have that can go out now and listen to appeals? How many people will there be that can maybe help speed the process up if the numbers are greater? But how many do we have at this present time?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — We have at the present time 16. And we did, as I said earlier, add a number of members in anticipation of a heavier workload. But the answer at this moment is 16.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I see, Madam Minister, that you have allowed the budget \$508,000 for the Assessment Appeals Committee. Would that not have been a smart move to increase that funding this year being that the number of appeals are going to I believe sky-rocket.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I don't remember the exact amount of the increase but I do know that it was increased this year. We did increase the budget in anticipation of a somewhat increased workload, so there is more money there.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, do you have any idea how long would an average property owner have to wait in order to get a hearing on their assessment appeal? And maybe, how does that compare to a couple of years ago? If you can actually, I guess, answer that.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think the long-term average is within a six-month period and we hope to be able to maintain that through this more . . . likely more intense period of appeals.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Given the tremendous amount of confusion surrounding the reassessment process, have you set aside any contingency funding to help educate the public about the most recent changes? And I guess maybe what I'm thinking of there is the .84 factor and that. Has any money been put into showing people what it really amounts to?

Because I think there's a lot of misconceptions out there, where first the education tax shifted to the rural taxpayer, and then as you know now with the .84 factor, it's back to the urban. I think in doing that we've caused more than just confusion; we've caused some very upset people out there.

But I think possibly by explaining exactly what has been done here might help the situation. Has anything like that been looked at?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — The activities that the member opposite mentions are not part of the mandate of the Municipal Board, so you wouldn't expect to see those items in this budget or in these estimates. That would be a function that has been carried out by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) and the Department of Municipal Government jointly through their, for instance, workshops that they held throughout the province last fall in a number of various locations for administrators and councils.

And councils are also encouraged — and many of them have made it a practice, even in other years — to hold local open houses during the time the assessment roll is open so that people can go in and get information, have their assessment notice clarified for their benefit prior to the deadline for making an appeal. In this way, a great many appeals and the cost of dealing with them in the system are avoided. So that's not part of the budget though, or the mandate of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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