

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the good citizens of Yarbo, Gerald, Churchbridge, and Esterhazy. 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.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions, Mr. Speaker, to do with the creation of regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Choiceland, Tisdale, Smeaton, and Nipawin.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is hereby read and received.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today, at the beginning of Ombudsman's Week, to introduce a number of special guests in your gallery to the legislature.

First I'd like to introduce the present Ombudsman, Barbara Tomkins, and her husband, Kirk Rondeau. They're in the front. Please stand when you're introduced.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And seated beside her is the Children's Advocate, Deborah Parker-Loewen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Then I have the staff. And I'll introduce all of the staff and they can all stand as their names are called. Gord Mayer, who is the general counsel; Roy Hodsman, investigator; Arlene Harris, an investigator; Brian Calder, investigator; Andrea Kawa, secretary; Debra Zick, executive secretary — those are the Regina staff.

And then from Saskatoon: Glenda Cooney, the assistant ombudsman; Joni Sereda, investigator; Laura Pun, investigator; Barbara Schindel, complaints investigator; and Joyce Strate, secretary. Welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, also on behalf of the opposition, I too would like to welcome our current Ombudsman, Ms. Tomkins, and our Children's Advocate, Ms. Parker-Loewen, and all of the staff to the legislature. I know this is the start of a very special week in the eyes of many people in Saskatchewan and we welcome the people to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery I'd like to introduce someone who may be familiar to you, a previous page from the session last year who many will remember, Jocelyn Arthur, and she is with her friend, Jennifer Beaton, who has just finished her degree in political science. So now they're putting their knowledge to the test here. But also leaving no stone unturned in their search for summer employment has led them to the legislature. So would you please join me in welcoming Jocelyn and Jennifer here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce to the members of the Assembly today, a very special group of school kids that come many, many miles from the small community with a big heart of Garson Lake, Saskatchewan. They're here today to visit the Assembly, and they're being accompanied by Carrine Cann, who is a teacher in that community, with the chaperon, Dora Laprise.

And these students are here from grade 1 and up, and they're here to see the Assembly work. And I know it took a lot of effort and hard work to bring them to this big, beautiful building, and we certainly hope that they watch the proceedings today and learn a lot.

So I would ask the Assembly members to please welcome this very special group of people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the third party we would also like to welcome the Ombudsman and staff to the Assembly today, and wish them well in their endeavours in the future.

Also while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome Jocelyn Arthur and her friend Jennifer. Jocelyn just lives a few miles north of my place. And I'm sure her dad wishes she was at home seeding rather than sitting in the legislature. But I'd still like to welcome them here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce through you to the House, seven students from F.W. Johnson Collegiate in Regina. They are transitional learning centre students who are here to observe the proceedings of the legislature. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Parr, and assistants Mr. Dennis and Susan Borys. And I would like to ask the members of the Legislative Assembly to join with me in welcoming these young people here today and I will be meeting with them for a short time at the conclusion of question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Ms. Lorje: — Yom Ha Shoah is Holocaust Remembrance Day. Yom Ha Shoah literally means "the day of annihilation by fire", a brutally appropriate name for a day in which we remember one of the sorry chapters of an often dismal century, the slagheap of intolerance which led to the murder of 6 million Jews.

During the '50s and '60s there was kind of a big chill on remembering the Holocaust — an attempt to put it behind us, so to speak. This silence led to the Keegstras and the Zundels of the world who denied the Holocaust.

And so in the '90s we witness a bloody replay of the '40s: Bosnia, Hercegovina, Rwanda, and East Timor. The cancer of intolerance has not disappeared, just mutated. That is why we need once more to speak out publicly, to bear witness against atrocity everywhere.

This summer I attended the war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, and what I saw and heard both sickened me and made me determined to speak out.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that new people are speaking out as well. Our page, Daniel Abramson, has just won a national award for his essay on the lessons of the Holocaust — giving hope that he and his generation will never be silent witnesses to the intolerable events of the past and giving hope to the future for all of us. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

25th Anniversary of the Provincial Ombudsman

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to recognize the important contribution made by the office of the Provincial Ombudsman to the Legislative Assembly and to the democratic process in Saskatchewan. I was also honoured to be part of the luncheon this morning recognizing the office of the people who have brought added dignity and accountability of the government for 25 years.

The Provincial Ombudsman receives, investigates, and resolves complaints of unfairness against the provincial government. Where there is a finding of unfairness, the Ombudsman makes recommendations to redress the problem.

The Ombudsman is an essential player in modern democracy. In the 20th century, I think it fair to say, there is a growing sense of alienation within our society about government. People sometimes feel, rightfully, that it is impossible to win against government, let alone work through the hierarchy to the people at the top.

Without a doubt, the services provided by the Ombudsman are valuable and essential. However despite the fact the Ombudsman has served the people for 25 years, the reality is that many people do not know they have this office to turn to.

Mr. Speaker, people need to know that when they feel they are treated unfairly by government that there is an avenue of redress. The Ombudsman has informed me that the services provided by the office are too little known both by government and the public. If the Ombudsman is to remain an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly and play an effective role in our democracy, it is crucial that the office receive full support from both the Assembly and the government.

On behalf of the official opposition, we congratulate you on your 25th anniversary and commit to raising the profile and the importance of the office to the people of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Hospital for La Loche

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition agrees with us that Saskatchewan has the best health care system in the world. The member from Arm River finally admitted that last week. Since the opposition has finally come to terms with our first-rate health care system, they must also realize that we are maintaining the system despite the millions of dollars in cut-backs by federal Liberals to the health care system.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, even in the face of federal Liberal cut-backs, the opposition members agree that we have the best health care system in the world. This is a true and well-deserved compliment to this government and it is a commitment to our health care system.

Our continued support and commitment to our health care system is moving forward, Mr. Speaker. Northern residents in

the community of La Loche recently received the good news that they will be getting a new hospital. The announcement is the third major health project undertaken in northern Saskatchewan recently. The new facility will replace the existing hospital and enable the Keewatin-Yatthe District Health Board to further develop its health services to the area residents.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that this and other announced projects are well-received amongst opposition members as it again demonstrates the government's dedication to our health care system — a health care system they say is the best in the world. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aid to Manitoba Flood Victims

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to thank and recognize the efforts of CBC (Canada Broadcasting Corporation) radio, Bell Canada, and the many artists who sang and read their works on Friday's *Morningside* with Peter Gzowski.

This wasn't the usual *Morningside*, although I enjoy the program on the occasions I get to listen to it. This show was very different; entitled "Red River Rally," this show was dedicated to the thousands of families in Manitoba currently inundated by the flood.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians from every corner of our nation joined hands to show support with their generous contributions. I am pleased to hear this effort to date has raised over \$800,000 to help Manitoba families to rebuild their homes, their businesses, and their lives.

The telephones are still being manned. So for those who still wish to contribute, the number is 1 888 285 3051. I encourage each member here today and those listening, watching on the TV, to do their part in supporting Manitoba by calling this number and helping our neighbours.

For those interested in volunteering, Pastor Danielson in Oxbow is collecting the names of individuals to go to Manitoba to help rebuild in whatever ways possible. This is in response to the many volunteers from Manitoba who helped to clean up Oxbow after the plough wind devastated our area two years ago.

In closing, a big thank-you to Peter Gzowski and CBC radio for organizing this event, and for Bell Canada for providing free long distance for those who donated to the cause. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join with the member from the third party in commending CBC *Morningside* for their "rally in the valley" program.

As we know, last Thursday the member from Prince Albert Carlton announced the two fund-raising efforts for the victims

of the Manitoba flood. One was the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's pledge of money and its challenge to other organizations. The other was Peter Gzowski's CBC Radio program, *Morningside*, and its four-hour Friday morning rally for the valley.

I am happy to report that as of yesterday, as the member said, the rally for the valley has raised more than 800,000 in pledges. It is my understanding that the number 1 888 285 3051 will be open all week for those who wish to still join and help the nationwide effort for those homes who have been lost or damaged — those who wish to do something other than toss one symbolic sandbag towards the camera.

Neighbourliness works in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and I congratulate *Morningside* and the CBC for proving it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tragic Accident in Thunder Creek Constituency

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday a tragic truck-bus accident occurred near the community of Palmer in my constituency, taking the lives of three residents. Three passengers in the truck — Jamie Desnoyers and his mother Vicky, along with Sarah Johnstone — were killed in the crash. Another, Dana Smith, was injured in the accident and is now recovering in the Plains Health Centre. All came from the Coderre area.

Mr. Speaker, Vicky Desnoyers and Sarah Johnstone were employees of the Gravelbourg *Tribune* weekly paper, which serves much of Thunder Creek. Dana Smith is also a *Tribune* employee.

Our condolences go out to the families of the victims and to their co-workers, like Paul Boisvert, the editor of the *Tribune*. Mr. Boisvert, the only staff member of the *Tribune* not involved in the accident, tragically arrived to an empty office on Friday morning.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, our prayers also go out to the communities of Coderre and Gravelbourg and to employees at the Gravelbourg Auto Body shop, who have lost friends, neighbours, and a co-worker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Arbor Day

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Arbor Day, the first day of National Forest Week, and both of these observances have over the years taken on the kind of Disney-esque Sunday school aura in which adults put on their business dress and children in party clothes plant a tree in a park and then go about their business as usual for the rest of the year.

That's unfortunate — a misconception that can be corrected with a few facts.

Forestry contributes over 600 million to the Saskatchewan economy every year and there are over 8,000 jobs connected to this industry. And that doesn't include the jobs and the pleasure associated with other activities in the forest such as hiking, fishing, hunting, and camping.

In other words, planting a tree is serious business, and planting a multitude of trees is crucial to our economy, to say nothing of our environment.

And here's another fact: for generations we have been much better at chopping down trees than replacing them. And so this Arbor Day we celebrate the importance of our trees and forests as a way of life, not just to ourselves but to the existence of the planet itself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Interchange on Canadian Studies Conference

Mr. Kowalsky: — There are few things stronger than the power of people united around a common idea. Sir John A. Macdonald rallied Canadians around the idea of a rail line linking our nation from sea to sea.

Tommy Douglas implemented medicare built on a common belief that every person was entitled to universal health care. Similarly, Nellie McClung helped rally Canadians to secure the right to vote for women; and first nation leaders today promote the idea of a better life for first nations people.

This week in Prince Albert, 250 students from across our nation are grappling with the theme of Inclusion: The Challenge of the Next Millennium. This 1997 Interchange on Canadian Studies conference will identify what actions, structures, attitudes, lifestyles, and values must be confronted in order to realize the idea of equitable participation by people the world over in the 21st century.

Organizers have scheduled many prominent speakers for workshops and discussions. Among them are members of this Assembly: the Hon. Minister of Education, the minister responsible for Women's Secretariat, the member from Greystone, and the Hon. Minister of Finance.

Even I will have the honour of representing the Minister of Education on Friday next for the closing ceremony.

This is an excellent opportunity for these 250 young Canadians to exchange their ideas on inclusion and how the challenge of inclusion in the next millennium will be fostered. I fully expect the ideas exchanged in Prince Albert to foster great commitment to participation in the political, economical, social . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Melfort Power Failure

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning at approximately 9 o'clock the power suddenly and absolutely went off in the whole north-east of Saskatchewan. It's my understanding that a farmer in burning some stubble ended up letting the fire or having the fire get away from him and it burnt down the two poles that support the main grid for the whole north-east coming from the Beatty substation.

Mr. Speaker, what turned out to be a short-term inconvenience turned out to be a long-term power outage lasting some 11 hours. And it ended up being a very serious circumstance for the community. Motorists were stranded at service stations, counting on the city of Melfort to be able to provide fuel for their vehicles. Restaurants and businesses closed all through the community. People at churches had to get by with opening doors and windows, and the ministers all had to preach a little more loudly.

Mr. Minister, what I'd like to know is, all the costs that are incurred in such an outage, who is responsible for picking up the costs of this kind of damage?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for the question. As you will know, with the power grid the size and the expanse of the one that we have serving Saskatchewan, there are all measure of circumstances that can create power outages. This is in fact an unfortunate circumstance and I would certainly be willing to give the member a briefing with respect to this incident. And if he wants to contact my office, I'd be more than willing to brief him on it this afternoon.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in discussing exactly the circumstances of why it took 11 hours to get Melfort back on line, it seems to be the situation that the Power Corporation was able to re-route power from the North in order to accommodate Tisdale and Nipawin and some of the north-east sections, but they have told me that what has happened is because the infrastructure has not been upgraded to meet the increased demand that's happening in the whole north-east, it means that Melfort was virtually isolated and left alone. Now on a warm day like yesterday, this doesn't become a critical event, but if something like this happened when it is 40 below with a wind, you're now going to have a situation that's a lot more serious than somebody's ice cubes melting in the fridge.

Mr. Minister, is it true that the fact that you have not supported the infrastructure improvements in the north-east, is what resulted in the fact that Melfort had to be off-line that long?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

member what is true is, because of the increased economic activity in this province, the Power Corporation has experienced some very dramatic increases in load, not only in the north-east, but the north-west and in the southern part of the province.

The fact of the matter is, as incremental electrical energy is consumed because of an expanded and a growing economy, it does put stress on the infrastructure. With respect to the amount of commitment that this government and this corporation has given to delivering electrical energy across this province, I think that it can be said that there is due diligence done and we will ensure that there is an adequate supply of power in all areas of this province.

I want to say that the capital construction that he may be referring to might be the RUD (rural underground distribution) program that was discontinued. That discontinuance will be replaced and lines will be replaced when the requirement for enhanced facility is necessary.

Our commitment is to ensure a safe and secure source of electricity around the province and I think history will show that SaskPower has done just that over the past 50 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, instead of SaskPower fooling around with credit cards and adventures in Guyana, the problem is is that the infrastructure that should be in place by a Crown utility who is supposed to provide service to rural Saskatchewan and our Saskatchewan people was obviously found to be lacking, and as a result the community was shut down for 11 hours yesterday.

What you need to do, Mr. Minister, is stop fooling around with all these trivial exercises and get back to the basics of what the Crown corporation is supposed to do: is to develop a safe and reliable system that also looks after the possibility of backups in the event of emergency. Will the minister commit to doing an evaluation of what happened in Melfort, and to assure the people of Saskatchewan that there isn't similar kinds of circumstances waiting to happen all across this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what I would ask is the member not get too excited. I've indicated that we will give him a full and a detailed briefing on this particular issue.

If the member is so concerned about the changes and the pressures put on the Crown corporations, perhaps he would want to focus on what his federal cousins are doing with respect to deregulation and the changes that are being imposed on these corporations. The member, Mr. Speaker, throws his hands up in the air. He doesn't want to hear about that. But the fact is that deregulation is requiring these corporations to make some very dramatic changes.

If that member is convinced and is of the belief that SaskPower

has not been delivering good service, I would ask the member to come to my office, sit down with the officials, and they can describe to him in great detail where this corporation has come from, the impact of deregulation that's been imposed by his federal counterparts.

We're all going to learn to live with this, Mr. Speaker, whether it's SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskEnergy. Deregulation is now something that we're facing and we're going to do our best to cope with this as times have been changing.

So if the member is really concerned and if he is interested, he could have contacted my office. He would have had an answer this morning as opposed to grandstanding here in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipal Governments

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when confronted about the devastating effect revenue-sharing cuts are having on Saskatchewan communities, the Minister of Municipal Government stated that, and I quote, "Everything is fine in municipal land." If the minister believes that, then she's had one too many rides on the spinning teacups.

Soon after her comment, the president of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), Murray Westby, expressed his outrage to the media. Mr. Speaker, the dozens of mayors and reeves and administrators I have met with also can't believe the minister's remarks.

Will the minister now apologize to the thousands of Saskatchewan people who are facing higher mill rates, crumbling roads, and lack of services, because of her revenue-sharing cuts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that we have reduced the amount of the revenue-sharing pool and made some changes in the distribution formula. Starting tomorrow, I will be attending all over the province a series of meetings that SUMA has on an annual basis throughout all the regions. And I will be available for all of the councillors of urban municipalities in Saskatchewan to put their questions to me directly, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the minister maybe should have an attitude adjustment before she meets with these people or she's in big trouble.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement that everything is fine in municipal land shows pure arrogance. I found approximately that four out of five municipalities are being forced to hike their mill rates because they have no other choice. They already cut services and capital projects and administration. The minister did not create any tax room by changing the health levy

because she took the 12 million from the revenue-sharing funds on the other side.

When will the minister truly respond to the concerns she gets in letters and calls from the cities, towns, and rural areas suffering from her revenue-sharing cuts? Will she admit the cuts have finally gone too far?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, municipalities are not dealt with in exactly the same way percentage-wise. There are factors taken into account in the distribution formula such as population, amount spent on administration versus services, and so on.

But municipalities are governed, as the member opposite knows and used to be one of those, by locally elected people who are highly accountable on a daily basis to the people that they serve. They've done a very good job in working with the resources they have and they will continue to do so.

But I need to say this, Mr. Speaker, that there is . . . in the reduction in the provincial sales tax from 9 to 7, a number of municipalities are saving considerable amounts on their purchases. We're sharing with them the infrastructure, federal and provincial infrastructure money this year. And they no longer have to remit . . . Although the revenue-sharing pool is reduced, they no longer have to remit the 2 mills for hospitals, the public health levy at 50 cents per capita, and the social assistance levy. They now have that tax room available to use for municipal purposes without their membership seeing any increases, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Madam Minister, what you did is you removed \$12 million and turned around and cut them by 29. That doesn't sound like fair game to me.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here to testify that everything is not rosy in small town Saskatchewan. On Friday afternoon I met with mayors and administrators who are frightened at the government's attack on their funding. It all filters down, and this government is attacking property owners, councils, businesses, and the way of life in rural areas in smaller communities. These people want to know if the NDP (New Democratic Party) government is including them in the plans for the future.

Will the minister tell us if revenue sharing has any future in rural Saskatchewan, and are we heading towards zero — I mean zero, Madam Minister — funding for municipalities?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the rural and urban revenue-sharing pool stands at about \$40 million right now. It's subject to budgeting considerations like all government expenditures are. We have no plans at the moment to reduce it further. But we're in constant communication with municipalities through the municipal round table and the memorandum of understanding, Mr. Speaker. And we think

that that is the appropriate forum to deal with these issues and not necessarily grandstanding in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Snowmobile Accident Coverage

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

Mr. Minister, you recently received a letter regarding Mr. Darrel Fitterer of Fiske. Mr. Fitterer was participating in a local charity hill-climbing event for snowmobilers. He was involved in an accident in which he totalled his snowmobile off and broke his right leg . . . or arm. Mr. Fitterer has now been informed that SGI is not going to cover him for the damage to his snowmobile or for his injury because it occurred while he was taking part in a competition.

Mr. Minister, why has SGI refused to cover Mr. Fitterer for this accident?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to first say to the member that I have not seen in detail the correspondence on Mr. Fitterer, and had I seen that correspondence, I would say to the member opposite that I would not be in a position here to discuss Mr. Fitterer's case with you. It's not the practice of this House that we would take an individual case and review it in any kind of detail in this Assembly.

I know that Mr. Fitterer, if he was in fact participating in an event of this nature, SGI would be exercising its policy in accordance with that regulation and would accordingly speak to that. If the member opposite would send me a correspondence on that, I would be pleased to review it with you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we already have sent correspondence to your office, and I would assume that your officials would be bringing it to your attention.

Mr. Minister, apparently SGI has a policy that will . . . that it will not provide coverage for any accident that occurs during a competition. The problem is SGI hasn't bothered to inform the people of Saskatchewan and the snowmobilers of Saskatchewan of this restriction. I have a copy of the latest SGI snowmobiling guide. Nowhere in this guide does it say that there is not coverage for local charity events like the one Mr. Fitterer was involved in.

Mr. Minister, how far does this restriction go? Are poker derbies exempted? Or more importantly, how are people supposed to know that they don't have coverage if it doesn't say so in SGI's own guide?

Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that SGI has neglected to mention this restriction in its guide, will you provide Mr.

Fitterer with the coverage for his accident?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to just explain again to the member opposite that in the current review of our policy, which is the SGI overall policy, one of the issues that we're of course discussing and reviewing in some detail is how we're going to insure snowmobiles into the future.

As the member opposite may or may not know, in the province of Saskatchewan snowmobiles are expected to be insured. And we currently have about 40,000 snowmobiles that are operating in this province. And of those 40,000 only about 17,000 of those machines are insured in Saskatchewan.

Accordingly, what we're doing is examining in some detail whether or not into the future these kinds of events as they relate to snowmobiling . . . as you know, snowmobiling in this province has become a major winter sport, has become a family event. We have a number of snowmobile trails across the province that are going to be expanding into the future.

And there may be some issues here that SGI hasn't covered off as clearly as we would like within our campaign brochure. And to the member opposite, we would say to you that as we review that policy in some detail, we'll be sure that we include this issue as it relates to snowmobile events.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teachers' Federation Disciplinary Procedures

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) has expressed some very grave concerns about your proposed changes to The Education Act and The Teachers' Federation Act. Once again you seem to be tipping the balance in favour of the unions and against the best interests of schools and, most important, students.

The SSTA is most concerned about section 45 of The Teachers' Federation Act which gives the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) sweeping powers to discipline individual teachers for anything the STF deems to be conduct contrary to the collective interests of teachers. Madam Minister, why is it necessary to give such wide-ranging powers to the STF to use against teachers who are simply trying to do their job?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't share the SSTA's concern about this legislation, that it would impose unreasonable restrictions on individual teachers.

What I can say to the member is that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is a mature professional organization which has demonstrated its integrity and credibility in this province for more than 60 years. And to suggest that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation would somehow deny its own members fundamental individual rights is a disservice to

the teachers and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not questioning the age of the STF or exactly where they're at. We're questioning you and what you're doing to them — and it's your legislation.

Madam Minister, the SSTA gives some examples of the kinds of infractions that may result in disciplinary actions and fines levied against teachers by the STF. For example, a teacher who volunteers to coach a basketball team after hours could be fined, because this is contrary to STF policy. A teacher who supervises pupils over the noon hour could be fined, because this is contrary to STF policy.

Madam Minister, this new legislation shows no understanding of how schools are actually run in this province and no regard for the best interests of students. Madam Minister, because of your cut-backs a lot of schools cannot afford to pay extra for a basketball coach, so they'll probably end up simply dropping the basketball team.

Madam Minister, why do you want to penalize teachers who put forward a little extra effort and participate in the community?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I just disagree with what the member is saying. It is my view that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation will not hold the view that is being expressed by the member opposite.

It is my view that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, which was very much involved in the drafting of this legislation — and this is the kind of legislation that they wanted — they are a grass roots organization that has the capacity to determine how it's going to exercise its various powers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is not unlike other professional legislation in this province. Each session we introduce professional legislation where organizations govern themselves. And all I can say to the member is that I have not seen any professional legislation that has implemented the kinds of abuses that the member speaks of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She may not have seen it but I doubt if the doors have ever been that wide open to misuse as she's opening them right now.

This legislation will penalize them simply for their words — if they dare to speak out against the policy of the STF. For example, a teacher could be fined for expressing support of the present legislation requiring substitute teacher salaries to be negotiated at the local level, because that's contrary to the STF policy. So not only are teachers prohibited from acting against the STF policy, now they're prohibited against speaking against STF policy.

Madam Minister, what happened to freedom of speech? Why are you giving the STF the right to fine teachers for expressing their views? And that's why I know . . .

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it clear that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, its executive and council, widely . . . had a wide consultation process on this piece of legislation. They have worked with the Department of Education on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have served in this House for some 11 years and I have never seen, in the 11 years that I've served in this House, such an unprecedented attack on the teachers' federation and teachers in this province. Mr. Speaker, I find the member's response appalling.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Multiple Sclerosis Drug

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Multiple Sclerosis Month and on May 8 members of this Assembly will likely stand in this House and recognize the thousands of people who live with this disease.

That's all well and good, Mr. Speaker, but MS (multiple sclerosis) sufferers need more than just recognition. They need a commitment from this government that Betaseron will become insured under this province's health plan. Betaseron is a drug that would greatly improve the quality of life for many, but it is clear that the Minister of Health has no compassion for these people.

When I last raised this issue on April 7 in this House, the minister stated, and I quote from *Hansard*:

The drug Betaseron is not touted as a drug that allows people to live normal lives. It is a drug which may allow certain people with (MS) to have a better quality of life for a . . . short period of time.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, after the minister made those statements, I did receive many calls regarding the minister's statements.

The MS Society of Canada is encouraging everyone to wear a carnation, make a donation this month . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. The hon. member has been quite lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to put his question directly.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 8 will the Minister of Health make a donation to the people who are affected with MS? Will the minister agree to include Betaseron under this province's drug plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, certainly that matter is under active consideration by this government. And I stand by what I

said before, that Betaseron should not be touted as a cure for multiple sclerosis. Tragically, there is no cure. However, Betaseron may be helpful to some individuals and the merits and costs of Betaseron will have to be considered.

I want the member to know that I've certainly been to the MS research centre in Saskatoon and spoken to the medical professionals, spoken to people from the MS society, and I'll continue to do so.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the efforts that we're trying to take is to talk to the federal government about Bill C-91, which is the patent drug protection for drug companies, which unfortunately raises the price of drugs quite a bit. We also are interested in talking to the federal government about funding a national drug plan, with which we would be willing to participate. All three of those things would be useful for sufferers of MS.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well listening to the minister, maybe I should ask him if he agrees with his federal leader, who thinks that Mr. Chrétien shouldn't be putting any more money into health care. Maybe that's the provincial's policy plan as well, Mr. Speaker.

However, you've been studying this thing to death for two years, Mr. Minister. We know that your government has received the report, the national review of the drug, and the minister said a year ago that very soon he would make a decision. How much longer do these people have to suffer, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Speaker, Quebec, Ontario, and our neighbours to the west, B.C. (British Columbia), have already recognized the importance of this drug. Why won't you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — As I've indicated to the member, Mr. Speaker, the matter is under active consideration, and I expect that we'll be making a decision quite shortly.

The member is not correct if he's suggesting that we've been sitting on this decision for a year. This matter has been under active consideration, Mr. Speaker, by people who are expert in the field of pharmaceuticals, experts — unlike the member and myself; we're not experts.

So as Minister of Health I have to take advice from people who are expert. That's what I'm trying to do, and we will take that advice, consult as widely as we can. We don't want to hold out hope to people with multiple sclerosis that there is some drug that will cure them — tragically that is not the case. It may be helpful to some individuals. We'll continue to look into it and consider it, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that we'll be able to make a decision in the near future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a known fact that this drug does help some people, so why not give them the opportunity to have this drug, the ones that afford it. I guess it goes back to the user-pay that this government wants us to have. If you can afford to buy the drug, Mr. Speaker, then you can use it.

A good example: Prince Albert resident Michelle Mostowich's brother and sister are just two of these many victims. I've raised them in this House before. One of Michelle's siblings can afford the drug Betaseron and the other can't; so one uses, one doesn't. The government continues to say, and it did in the House again today, that we have the best health care system in the world, in Canada. And we do, and I've said we do, and people recognize that. But it's getting to the point where only is it the best system if you can afford to pay, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Minister, why won't you show some compassion to these people, get on with this. Make the announcement and let the people use the drug that want to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member has indicated to this House that Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia have approved coverage of Betaseron. I want to assure the member that none of those provinces have Liberal governments. Because it is the policy of the Liberal Party, contrary to what that member says, to go to a user-pay system. And when that member, who admits that we have the best health system in the world here in Saskatchewan, notwithstanding that we may have some problems from time to time, when that member gets up and accuses this government of supporting user-pay, all I can say, Mr. Speaker, is to quote that member, who said on May 1, 1996, "If there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the policy of this party and this government is to support the public medicare system that was founded in this province. That's what we're going to do. We're not going to make people pay for medicare services and we're not going to adopt the policy of the Leader of the Liberal Party, which is to privatize the hospitals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 61, The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

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

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce three motions to substitute members on committee.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That the name of Mr. Ben Heppner be substituted for that of Mr. Jack Goohsen on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Communication

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move as well, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That the name of Mr. Dan D'Autremont be substituted for that of Mr. Jack Goohsen on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Communication.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Estimates

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That the name of Mr. Don Toth be substituted for that of Mr. Jack Goohsen on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to move second reading of Bill No. 49, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 1997.

This legislation governs election procedures in all urban municipalities, all northern municipalities, and all school division in the province. The Act is reviewed and revised if necessary before each round of local elections, Mr. Speaker.

Because we amended the Act last year, this Bill makes only a few amendments to the legislation. These amendments in general were requested by local governments. At the proposal stage, they were circulated to stakeholder groups, including SUMA, the SSTA, the city clerk's association, as well as local government administrators.

The first amendment of significance is the provision to permit persons who are disabled to vote outside the polling place in circumstances where it is not accessible to them. This is a standard feature in local elections in a number of provinces, Mr. Speaker. It supplements a number of provisions that already exist in the Act to ensure that voters who are disabled may cast their ballots with the minimum of inconvenience.

A second reform in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, changes the old reference in the Act to handicapped persons. The new terminology in this Bill now makes reference to persons with disabilities. This is in keeping with the government's policies of communicating with respect.

A third amendment clarifies the existing provision for computerized voting or vote counting. It ensures that when local officials choose to use computerized methods to make the election process more efficient and cost effective, all the related procedures like recounts may be modified to reflect this automated model.

A fourth provision reinstates the long-standing right enjoyed by spouses of resort village electors to run for office. This provision was inadvertently deleted when the Act was last amended in 1996.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains only a few provisions that basically update and fine-tune local election rules.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 49, An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a Bill before us which does in some respects modernize the election procedures for municipal elections. I wish on behalf of the opposition to congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs for the reforms that are contained within this Bill and to say that we do not have any problem with them, except that there are a number of other suggestions for bringing election law into the 20th century before we leave the 20th century, that the minister has not followed up on. And I'm disappointed with that.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that we are pleased, first of all, that there are provisions to make it easier for disabled voters to cast their votes. And secondly, that it certainly makes sense in this day and age that there would be provision made to have computers assist with voting and vote tabulation. So these are progressive moves, and as I say, I'm certainly not rising to condemn them.

However, there are two other issues that I have previously raised that I would like to again commit for the minister's consideration. I earlier asked the minister why we didn't have health district elections and municipal elections on the same date. They are to occur this fall — municipal elections on October 22; health district elections, two days earlier on October 20.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fact that they are going to be two days apart is just absolutely a ridiculous situation. It means first of

all, increased cost because the staff to run the elections will now require duplication, and of course rental of facilities for polling stations will be duplicated.

But what is more significant is that it is an inconvenience to voters and almost certainly will result in a lower voter turnout. I think one of the problems with calling our elections democratic is that a democratic election requires a decent turnout of the electorate. And by running health district elections independently and standalone as we did two years ago, we end up with voter turnouts which in some cases were not much more than about 10 per cent.

Is that really a fair reflection of community opinion? I don't think it is when you run into such very, very low voter turnouts. We could get a higher voter turnout, I believe, if the elections were run together so that we would have health district, education, and municipal.

Now of course it is a long-standing tradition in this province that municipal and education elections are run together, and as I say, Mr. Speaker, that almost certainly results in both a higher voter turnout and in a cost saving. So it simply makes sense that we now run health district elections at the same time so that all local government elections are held together.

They are all fixed-term elections. Now of course the problem with provincial and federal elections is that they're not on fixed term. But all of our local district elections are on fixed terms; so they should be on the same date rather than, as I say, only two days apart. That's inconveniencing voters who have to make two trips to the polls in the same week, and unnecessarily adding to the cost.

We know that history tells us that municipal elections attract somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent of the electorate. Our health district elections last time attracted only somewhere between 10 and 15 per cent. So I think this is a reform which could double the voter turnout at least, double or treble the voter turnout for our health district elections if the minister would adopt it.

Now I recall that I asked the minister this question about three weeks ago in this House, and at that time she said it was an interesting suggestion and she liked it and she'd have something more definite later. I wish now that she would give us something more definite by including that in this amendment.

This session does not have a long time yet to go; so if the minister doesn't move very quickly we are stuck with this ridiculous situation of health district elections two days apart.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as well as encouraging the minister to address my suggestion that health district elections should be run together with municipal and education elections, there is one other suggestion I would like to commit to her and ask for her consideration on. And that is the question of the voters' list. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the tradition in this country has been to have enumeration and a new voters' list prepared for every election, and I understand in Saskatchewan the cost of

that procedure is \$900,000 — just under a million dollars per election.

Now as you are aware, Mr. Speaker, this year we have had a federal enumeration which is being called the last enumeration for Canada, and we are now moving to a permanent voters' list. If we have a permanent voters' list at the federal level, it should be a very simple matter for the province to link into that permanent voters' list and that permanent voters' list will then become the basic voters' list for all elections, whether they be national, provincial, or local. And this would again result in both significant cost savings but also make the procedure far simpler than the procedure we presently use.

The procedure of enumeration and new voters' lists prepared for every single election is again something out of the Dark Ages. Let's bring our election law into the 20th century before we go into the 21st century.

We know that in the United States, their voter's list — registration they call it — is the same no matter what level of election we're on, and I think that this would be an excellent thing now that Canada has a permanent voters' list. I would ask the minister to link into the permanent voters' list so it becomes the basic voters' list for our provincial and our local elections.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we do have some reforms before us in this Bill. They are reforms that the Liberal opposition has no difficulty at all in accepting and agreeing with.

But there are other obvious reforms that we've raised before. I raise them again. I ask for the minister's consideration, if she would amend this Bill, to provide, one, for all local elections on the same date — municipal, education, and health; and two, provisions for the province and local elections to use the new permanent voters' list. 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.

(1430)

Bill No. 57 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 57, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1997.

As many members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act establishes the level of provincial assistance to be allocated to both rural and urban municipalities. Accordingly, these amendments give legal effect to decisions reflected in the 1997-98 budget. This Bill provides for a method of calculating the funds available to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool this year.

Although the funding to the pools is reduced over last year, we have undertaken a number of measures which will, in part,

offset the reductions and result in some municipalities being better off than in the past few years. These measures include removal of the public health levy and the social assistance plan levy, support for an extended infrastructure program, and reduction of the PST (provincial sales tax) by 2 per cent.

The 2 mill hospital levy has also been an irritant to municipalities and we have responded by removing this levy from the property tax base. The removal, however, will be revenue neutral to the provincial government and the municipal sector. For the province, the money that would have been raised by the levy will be taken from the revenue-sharing pool. At the same time municipalities have increased tax room. This allows them more flexibility to determine priorities of taxation and spending at the local level.

Amendments updating references to other legislation and confirming the ability to address funding distribution in regulations make up the remainder of this Bill.

In closing, total revenue-sharing funding of 47.7 million and an increased amount of tax room at the local level represent a significant level of financial support to Saskatchewan municipalities. I urge members to support this Bill.

Accordingly, I move second reading of Bill No. 57, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1997. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond to the minister's comments on this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

She had made the comment that some municipalities would be better off. I can't in my wildest imagination understand how any municipality in this province could be better off after \$29 million in funding cuts. The removal of the 2 mill health levy did absolutely nothing for them because it was removed from the revenue-sharing pool; so they gained absolutely nothing there.

I notice in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, also that what is conspicuous by its absence through the amendments is the main farm access road system, which was funded 50/50 by the government. This program is going to hurt rural communities and grain handling systems for years and years to come and it's just another blow to rural Saskatchewan.

What maybe even is going to hurt more is the elimination of the futures program, Mr. Speaker, which was cut from four to two after the '91 election and now is eliminated completely. And this program, Mr. Speaker, allowed municipalities to do a larger project so that in any given year they might construct four, five, six miles, depending on their allotment. With the futures program eliminated, that completely rules that out unless a municipality would like to fund the total project on their own. And I'm not just sure that that isn't what the government has intended in this Bill.

This futures program is going to hurt rural Saskatchewan to no end, because there is no way that an RM (rural municipality) is going to rip up a stretch of road for five years in a row and

build a kilometre at a time. And they also cannot afford to fund the whole program on their own.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that this Bill is what sets the revenue sharing for municipalities and I believe this year to be around approximately \$47 million with the infrastructure. When you work that out, Mr. Speaker, to the five or five and a half billion dollars that this province spends to run this government, \$47 million works out to be .008 or less than 1 per cent of the total budget for this province. And that's what we're giving out to our rural and urban municipalities to share in funding. I think actually at this point this is a complete disgrace, because we're offloading all our problems onto the local municipalities and we've balanced the budget on their back.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have many other questions, but I think I can ask them in committee.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, despite the unexpected increased revenues due to strong resource sector and the increased rate hikes by Crowns resulting in record profits, this government has determined that our most efficient level of government — municipal government — should absorb a larger reduction in revenue grants than the proposed 25 per cent.

The message I am receiving from municipal governments in my constituency is that even though the government's proposed 25 per cent reduction would have placed unnecessary hardships on them, they were given a year to prepare. However, these additional reductions will place the municipalities in a very difficult financial situation.

The mayor of Watson, Myron Knafelc, said this about the revenue-sharing reduction — the town is going to receive a 40 per cent reduction rather than the 24 per cent that it was told to expect. That translates into a reduction of almost \$26,000. Last year the revenue-sharing grant was \$63,823 and this year it is 27,884.

In contrast, when he started as mayor of Watson in 1991, the revenue-sharing grant was \$98,000. If you add this \$60,000 reduction to the loss of the \$52,000 community building grants, the \$8,500 economic development program, and the elimination of the McNab Regional Park funding, you can see why it's becoming increasingly difficult to operate a small town in Saskatchewan these days.

Along with the revenue decreases, the province has stepped in and taken over 25 per cent of the police fine revenue, even though they pay absolutely nothing towards the police budget. And they have offloaded SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) funding onto the municipalities. Watson used to pay \$850 for its SAMA fees and now they pay SAMA \$8,700.

Council is in the process of making the 1997 budget, and at this time no definite conclusions have been made. However, the town doesn't see it possible to swallow the \$26,000 grant reduction. The only choice they have to make up for the shortfall is a property tax increase. The comments of the mayor

of Watson are very similar to the comments I am receiving throughout my whole constituency.

Mr. Speaker, this government asks the municipalities to take a reduction in services and funding while their own coffers continue to increase, and increase their cabinet. What benefits have the taxpayers of Saskatchewan gained from the increase in staff at the legislature?

I am positive that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan would rather see the money spent in revenue grants to municipalities than an increase to the municipal taxes that most will face this year.

This government seems to think that investing in a business venture such as NST and losing \$16 million is acceptable. Yet they are unwilling to invest in the very foundation of Saskatchewan, that being our municipalities.

The government has proudly proclaimed their grand strategies for economic development. But let me tell you there won't be any economic development if this government continues to reduce its revenue sharing to municipalities.

Many of the RMs in my constituency have indicated that their road construction plan for this year . . . that they had road construction planned, but with the elimination of the futures program and the reduction in other revenue-sharing grants, there will be no construction whatsoever. In fact with the allocated \$15,000 per year, they will have to combine three or four other municipalities to determine what need is most pressing, and do that work.

How many roads can be repaired with \$60,000? Would \$60,000 every four years maintain the roads in all the municipalities? What economic development will we see in this province if there is not an infrastructure in which to move products?

The federal government has announced another cost-sharing infrastructure program, with the feds providing 50 per cent and the provincial and municipal governments providing the other 25 per cent each. That sounds like a great program. And the infrastructure in the province would benefit as well as the spin-off industries. Unfortunately in order to participate, the municipalities will have to raise their taxes.

This government is continually talking about their job creation goal of 30,000 by the end of the century. We all know that the government is far short of this goal. At the present time they have no hope of ever reaching it with the continued cut-backs.

The largest employer in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency is agriculture, followed by retail trade, health, manufacturing, and tourism. All of these areas, except possibly health, are totally dependent on access to market which can only be obtained through the continued maintenance of our roads. This government's decision will in fact cause employment to decrease rather than increase when the employers are not able to move their products to market as a result of poor road conditions.

We are all very well aware of the government's agenda to force

the amalgamation of municipalities. It's obvious that since this government lost its bid through the legislation, they are attempting to starve the RMs and the towns through cuts to revenue-sharing grants.

However, as these cuts get deeper and deeper, our infrastructure is being directly damaged. Sadly, it won't only be our infrastructure that will be ruined. Rural Saskatchewan will see the demise of the very industries it was dependent upon for survival.

How can the government continue to shift the tax burden to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan? In an NDP document entitled *Tax Fairness for the '90s*, the NDP stated Saskatchewan people are becoming increasingly concerned by the PC government's pattern of shifting the tax burden onto the local taxpayers, a tax shift that amounts to back-door tax increases.

What are they doing that's any different from that? Why must local governments bear the brunt of the provincial government's lack of commitment to the people of the province?

Many of the municipalities I spoke to claim that this government could not have picked a more inopportune time to implement revenue-sharing cuts. Municipalities do not need to cope with a loss of revenue when they and the taxpayers of the province are coping with a changed assessment system which most taxpayers don't even understand.

On top of that, municipalities have to determine their business tax policy, which is creating disharmony among municipalities.

This government sent out extremely loose guidelines which allowed municipal bodies to set taxes anywhere from zero to 50 per cent of the fair market value of business in their jurisdictions, with a goal of generating a similar amount of revenue as in previous years.

The education portion of this tax is creating disharmony amongst municipalities within in the Wadena School Division. The town of Wadena elected to adopt a 1 per cent business tax levy, which in effect has shifted some of the cost of education to neighbouring communities.

In 1996, this town discontinued tax . . . business taxes by 60 per cent as a result of complaints made by business owners regarding taxes. As Mayor Perry Banadyga stated:

We asked the school division to let us know what others were doing, but this dragged on and we needed to finalize our budget . . .

Rather than being strapped with a 33% business tax if other communities did not go (with) . . . 0% we chose to go with a 1% business tax?

The Wadena School Division offered all municipalities the option of a zero per cent business tax with a division establishing a policy based on no business tax. However, some communities set business taxes at 9 per cent, some at 12 per

cent, and some at 33 per cent to generate revenues similar to 1996.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is irresponsible of this government to reduce the revenue-sharing grants at the same time the municipalities are having to cope with the ramifications of reassessment. To force municipalities to increase taxes as well characterizes this government's lack of reality for the taxpayers of this province.

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

Bill No. 59 — The Education Amendment Act, 1997
Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to outline the purpose and the main provisions of these amendments in The Education Act, 1995. This statute serves as a fundamental legislative basis for our province's education system from kindergarten to grade 12. It provides for the establishment of school divisions and for the election of boards of education to govern the school services in their area.

The Act sets out the various powers and duties of boards of education in a wide range of areas, from taxation to curriculum, facilities, student transportation, employment of teachers, and other staff.

Mr. Speaker, as our education system evolves and responds to the ever-changing needs and circumstances of students, teachers, and communities, the Act itself must be updated regularly so it continues to serve our collective interests effectively.

The amendments included in this current Bill are intended to meet this objective. The amendments can be outlined under six major categories, and I will speak briefly about each of the six.

(1445)

First, housekeeping changes. A number of clauses in the Bill are intended simply to correct technical or drafting errors. In 1995 The Education Act was redrafted in conjunction with the translation of the legislation into French. And given that the Act has almost 400 sections, it was inevitable that a number of errors and omissions arose. We are now correcting those problems.

The second series of amendments are related to school year/school day issues. In recent years there's been a growing interest in alternatives to the traditional school year and school day in our province. And although discussions have involved a wide range of possible alternative models, there's been no consensus about the need for change or about the educational validity of these models.

The only exception to this general view involves what is sometimes called the balanced school year model. This model has been of particular interest to school divisions which use a semester system in high school and in which the first semester

has traditionally ended towards the end of January.

Over the past two or three years, school divisions in Regina and Saskatoon have implemented an alternative model in which school begins earlier in August and ends earlier in June, with the first semester ending just before Christmas. This concept appears to be working well and is supported locally, as well as by our various provincial partners.

Under existing legislation, this model can be implemented only with the annual approval of the Minister of Education. The proposed amendments will now give boards of education the flexibility to implement this model. Specifically, they'll be allowed to schedule their terms or semesters to accommodate the model and will also be allowed to start and end the summer vacation somewhat earlier than is currently allowed.

A further amendment in the area of school year and school day clarifies that boards of education cannot lengthen the school day without ministerial approval. And this amendment is intended to eliminate some perceived ambiguity in the current language of the Act.

The third series of amendments relate to meeting the needs of special needs students. Mr. Speaker, for many years the regulations under The Education Act included provisions whereby parents of special needs students could appeal decisions made by a board of education about the designation, placement, and program of their student. However, the Department of Justice has determined that the Act itself did not provide adequate authority for these regulations.

Amendments in the current Bill address this problem. The Act will now require boards of education to have formal procedures in place whereby parents or guardians can request a review of these decisions. Third parties are not being given authority to overturn decisions of elected trustees. This process will afford parents the opportunity to have an independent, third-party review the decision and make recommendations. These new provisions do include authority to make regulations respecting the review procedures.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth major amendment relates to the calculation of education tax on certain types of property. Earlier this year our government announced a measure designed to cushion the effects of provincial property reassessment on tax shifts in rural school divisions. Specifically, our government announced that, for education tax purposes, agricultural property would have a special factor applied to it. Explicit statutory authority is required in order for school divisions and municipalities to apply and administer this special factor when determining mill rates and levying taxes. This Bill includes the necessary authority, the actual numerical value of the factors being prescribed by regulation rather than being entrenched in the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the remaining two substantive amendments in the Bill are both related to current developments in the area of school division restructuring. Several months ago our government announced its policies and its approach to the restructuring of our K to 12 system in the province. We're

providing leadership by supporting locally developed ideas and proposals and by eliminating legislative barriers where possible.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan school divisions have historically been of two types — those whose area is limited to one city or town or village, and a larger rural school division which encompass a number of urban and rural municipalities. In the future, we expect to see school divisions amalgamating into jurisdictions which include both a substantial rural area and an urban area.

Our current legislation is based on the premiss that in larger urban centres, members of the board of education can be elected either at large or on the basis of wards, or subdivisions as they're called in the school division. In the rural area however, the only option has been election on a subdivision basis.

Amendments in this Act provide greater flexibility in this regard. Specifically, it will now be possible for the urban part of the school division to elect its board members either at large or by a subdivision, and for the rural part to have the same two options.

Mr. Speaker, the boards of education in the Prince Alberta area, who are in the final stages of a planned restructuring, have expressed strong interest in having this flexibility. And I understand that the boards in the Battlefords areas are also interested.

The final amendment which I wish to outline, Mr. Speaker, deals with successor rights for teachers. Collective bargaining for teachers occurs at two levels. There is a provincial collective agreement which deals with basic items such as salaries, sick leave, and pensions. This collective agreement automatically applies to teachers in every school division across the province.

In addition, teachers in each school division negotiate a local collective agreement commonly known as the LINC (Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee) agreement with their board of education. The existence of these local agreements makes it essential that legislation define what happens when existing school divisions are disestablished, new divisions are established, or schools in one division are transferred to a neighbouring division. The current provisions of the Act address this issue but do not do so consistently or appropriately.

Under certain circumstances, teachers affected by a school division restructuring retain their existing local agreement until they can participate in negotiating a new one. In other circumstances, teachers automatically lose their existing local agreement and immediately come under the provisions of the local agreement in the new division. It does not seem reasonable that different teachers or groups of teachers should be treated differently with respect to their local collective agreements.

The amendments in this Bill will establish a consistent

principle. Teachers who become employees of a different board of education as a result of restructuring will now retain their local agreement until a new agreement is negotiated for all teachers in the new school division. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, I might indicate that in two separate cases over the past few months, boards of education and teachers involved in restructuring concluded that this principle was the most fair. It was the most fair and the most appropriate one to apply, even though it was not supported by the current provisions of the Act.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the package of amendments included in this Bill will achieve a variety of objectives. In some areas they will establish and strengthen necessary statutory authority. In others they will provide greater consistency or flexibility in response to emerging trends.

As I said at the start of my remarks, The Education Act, 1995 is the primary statutory base for our K to 12 education system, and as the system changes to meet emerging needs, amendments to the Act are required. The present amendments are one more step in this continuing process.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I move that Bill No. 59, The Education Amendment Act, 1997, be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since our last sitting day, at which time we received Bill 59, I've had the opportunity to look through the number of sections that are proposed. And it's a far-reaching Bill in terms of the number of individuals and number of groups that are affected.

The minister has pointed out, I think, six key areas where she sees things that have occurred, whether they're of the housekeeping variety or whether they involve restructuring of boards and whether they involve teachers.

What I've done is take a look at the actual groups of people or individuals who are affected by this change to The Education Act. Firstly I see changes that will have implications on students, whether we take a look at the fact now that the provisions for a different school year, school day, are in place, those will have far-reaching implications on students. The other one of course that has a major implication, I think, is the change to the current conditions for those students with special needs and the ability to have those needs addressed. That particular section has, I believe, some controversy around it and I think we have to take a good, hard look at what that section is actually stating.

The other group, I think, that are affected very much so are the administrators. We see changes in this amendment in the actual Bill. We see changes to the duties of principal; we see changes to the duty of secretary-treasurer, directors. These are for clarification purposes, apparently, and that they re-examine the conditions that were in place prior to the Act actually being changed.

Another situation to look at of course, is the implications on school boards. And the minister has pointed out that indeed school boards are in a process right now of consultation with other school divisions; are looking at possible restructuring, looking at possible amalgamations. And there are far-reaching implications on that kind of procedure. It's not something that can be done very quickly, as we've seen across the province.

And there are a number of amendments and changes that will involve school boards. And I think that there's a need to pay very special attention to that area.

We take a look at the teachers, as the minister has pointed out. Teachers will be affected by school division restructuring. And while there is a need to address the rights and agreements that exist, there are particular sections of this Bill . . . And I'm still trying to take a look at sections 19 and 20, as to how they apply to the teachers and whether they're in the best interests of teachers, and the board as well.

Section 204 changes the way the local teachers' agreements are actually being applied, and that is also one that needs some very, very careful deliberation.

Above all, what I want to look at when we have to chance to fully assess this Bill over the next day or two is the fact that boards of education have received many, many dollars less over the last number of years. They are struggling with reduced grants; they are struggling with the fact that programs have been reduced in many schools. And I don't think boards of education want to have further . . . a further charge to them put in place. Costs that will be the responsibility of the board are not necessarily in the best interests of the students in that particular school division. So there's a need to address those costs.

When I take a look at all of the different groups that have been affected by this particular change to The Education Act and the fact that this Bill has just been before us, introduced for the first time at the last sitting, I would at this time move adjournment of this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 60 — The Teachers' Federation Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to explain the purpose of these amendments to The Teachers' Federation Act. Under this legislation the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the STF, is the principal organization representing the teaching profession in our province.

The STF has a wide range of responsibility and authority for dealing with matters which affect the profession itself and the relationship between the profession and the public. The STF is responsible for maintaining high standards of professional competence and conduct among teachers. In this respect the STF is required to deal with disciplinary matters in order to ensure that the public interest is effectively protected.

As well, the STF deals with professional development for teachers and with a wide variety of teacher welfare issues. In this latter area, the federation's most notable role is in collective bargaining at both the local and provincial levels.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments included in the present Bill involve all these major components of the federation's activities. The amendments can be divided into three main categories: (1) matters involving the federation's internal administration affairs; (2) matters relating to the federation's role in professional discipline; and (3) matters relating to the federation's dealings with its members in the context of collective bargaining.

The first category of amendments I will address is the category pertaining to the federation's administrative affairs. In this category the Bill clarifies . . .

The Speaker: — I'm having some difficulty being able to hear the minister's remarks and I would ask all hon. members to allow the minister to make her remarks in an uninterrupted kind of way.

(1500)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. In this category, Mr. Speaker, the Bill clarifies the relationship and responsibilities among the federation's chief executive officer, the executive, and the council. The various powers and duties are now defined in a way which more accurately reflects the federation's internal structure.

In addition, the terms "secretary" and "secretary treasurer" are replaced throughout the Act with the term "general secretary," since this is the title used by the federation for its chief executive officer.

Also the sections dealing with membership in the federation are amended to give the STF greater flexibility in admitting associate members and in allowing individuals to participate in health and other insurance plans administered by the federation.

For example, teachers in Indian band schools will now be eligible for associate membership, while authority to allow members of the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials to belong to the disability plan will be clear.

Finally in this category, a time line is prescribed by which employers must remit pension contributions to the federation on behalf of teachers. The deadline is 10 days following the end of the month to which the contributions apply. This requirement applies only to the Saskatchewan teachers' retirement plan administered by the STF. Contributions on behalf of teachers in the old pension plan administered by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission are remitted to the commission under separate legislation.

Prompt remittance of pension contributions is important because the financial stability of the pension plan depends in part on the ability to maximize investment returns on those contributions.

The second area, the federation's role in professional discipline. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has a statutory responsibility for dealing with cases involving the professional misconduct and competence of individual teachers. The federation's role in professional discipline is the second category of amendments I'll address.

The Act sets out principles and procedures which the federation must follow in investigating allegations of incompetence or misconduct. These procedures are designed to ensure fairness and due process for a teacher under investigation. At the same time, they're intended to ensure that the interests of students, other teachers, and the public at large can be effectively protected.

Over the past several years a number of standard features have been incorporated into Saskatchewan's professional legislation in order to ensure that these statutes continue to meet these two objectives effectively. We are now incorporating these features into the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Act and I'll outline the key amendments.

One, the name of the discipline committee is being changed to the professional ethics committee. The new name reflects the type of issue with which this committee deals and distinguishes its role from a new type of disciplinary process which I'll describe in a few moments.

Two, a public representative will now be appointed to serve on the professional ethics committee, bringing an outside perspective to bear on professional matters.

Three, complainants will now have an explicit right to be notified about disciplinary hearings and to attend those hearings. As well, the federation will be required to hold such hearings in public except where legitimate confidentiality considerations justify in camera hearings.

Four, the provisions requiring a complainant to submit a security deposit before an investigation proceeds are being eliminated, as such provisions are now outdated and are seen as an unreasonable barrier to individuals who wish to bring about what they consider to be legitimate complaints to the federation.

And five, the requirement for the federation to hold a penalty hearing before imposing a penalty will now be spelled out. As well, the complainant will have an explicit right to be notified of this hearing, to attend the hearing, and to be notified of the federation's final decision or recommendation on a penalty.

Mr. Speaker, there's a trend in our society towards dispute resolution mechanisms other than the traditional adversarial or confrontational procedures such as arbitration and formal legal hearings. In particular, procedures for attempting to resolve disputes through mediation are becoming increasingly popular.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has expressed a strong interest in having the authority to use such alternative dispute resolution mechanisms under its legislation, particularly in cases where a dispute is between members of the federation

itself. I consider this, Mr. Speaker, to be a forward-looking approach on the federation's part.

Accordingly, this Bill includes a new provision which will authorize the federation to establish mediation procedures where appropriate.

Three, federation role in teacher welfare and collective bargaining. The final category of amendments in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, relates to the federation's role in local and provincial collective bargaining for teachers. Teacher bargaining is not conducted under the provisions of The Trade Union Act; rather it's covered under the provisions of The Education Act.

The federation itself negotiates on behalf of teachers for purposes of a provincial collective agreement; while at the local level, local teacher associations appoint a bargaining committee to represent them. Given this structure for teacher bargaining, it's important for the federation, like any other bargaining agent, to have adequate authority to discipline its members for inappropriate behaviour in the context of collective bargaining.

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has ruled that a teacher's conduct in the context of collective bargaining cannot legitimately be dealt with as a matter of professional conduct under The Teachers' Federation Act. In the absence of any other relevant provisions in the Act, the implication of the court ruling was there was no mechanism for the federation to deal appropriately with this type of issue.

To rectify this problem, a new section is being added to the Act dealing with the collective interests of teachers in the context — and I want to repeat that — in the context of bargaining. The principles and procedures to be applied are being incorporated in one self-contained section of the Act in order to make it clear that these provisions are totally separate from those dealing with professional conduct and competence.

I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that these new provisions do not create any possibility — and I want to emphasize this again — these provisions do not create any possibility for a teacher to have his or her teaching certificate suspended or cancelled on the grounds of conduct relating to collective interests. The only penalties would be a reprimand or a fine similar to the types of fine which other bargaining agents or other trade unions can levy on their members.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation was established in our province over 60 years ago. Over the decades its role and responsibilities have grown along with those of the teaching profession itself. Today the federation has over 12,000 members throughout all parts of our province.

Teachers I believe to be proud of the way in which the federation has consistently served the interests of education in our province by promoting increasingly high standards of training, professional development, and professional conduct among its members.

As one of the key partners in education, the federation makes a vital contribution to our shared objective of quality education

for all of our Saskatchewan students.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that the legislation under which the federation operates be kept up to date and that it be responsive to evolving needs and circumstances in our education system. The amendments in this Bill will assist the federation in administering its internal affairs, and in carrying out its responsibilities on behalf of teachers and the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I move that Bill No. 60, The Teachers' Federation Amendment Act, 1997 be now read a second time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will be brief as far as my comments on Bill No. 30 . . . Bill No. 60. Taking a quick look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I've noticed that we have far-reaching implications for well over 10,000 people in Saskatchewan, when we look at the number of teachers that are in the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

The points that the minister has outlined have, I think, far-reaching implications on all teachers. Not only the people involved in the actual Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, as far as the executive council and the general secretary, but I think it has many, many implications on teachers all across the province.

In our quick reaction to the Bill this morning, Mr. Speaker, I've had a chance to consult with a few individuals just by making a quick phone call, and I guess I'm surprised. I'm surprised by the fact that teachers are not aware. The individual teachers out there in the field are not aware that this Bill is going through, so we have to consult with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation — and I'd like to have that meeting very quickly — to indeed find out why teachers in the field don't know that this Bill was occurring.

The other situation — and I know the minister has indicated this many times — that we have a unique situation in Saskatchewan, where we have all stakeholders involved in terms of consultation meetings. Whether we're talking about leagues — the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents — or whether we're talking about the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation or the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; those are the major players. And of course then we have parents and students involved as well through other organizations.

In contact this morning, I'm finding out that the stakeholders have not been all on the same page on this one. There has been very little consultation. In fact what I'm finding out, that is indeed the draft Bill has been given to stakeholders and said, this is what's going to occur. And I don't think that that's the kind of procedure that we want to occur in education. And there has to be some consultation. There has to be, I think, a commitment by all people involved to improve education in this province, and improve the working conditions for teachers and the collective agreements that apply to teachers. Those are

the kinds of things that we have great concern with.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to move adjournment of this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 17

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No 17 — The Dental Disciplines Act** be now read the second time.

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

Bill No. 16

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 16 — The Occupational Therapists Act, 1997** be now read the second time.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that we're on Bill No. 17, the Dental Disciplines Act. And . . . is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

A Member:— No, you just missed it.

Mr. McLane: — We're on occupational therapists . . . That's right; that's correct. That's what I thought, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, just a few words on the occupational therapists . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I know we're going to the Department of Health, Mr. Minister, soon, and that'll be good to get into, too.

Just a couple of comments on the occupational therapists, Mr. Speaker, and we will certainly be dealing with that in Committee of the Whole a little bit later, but one of the interesting things that I noticed of the news release that the minister put out regarding this Bill was the fact that, of course, that the occupational therapists will no longer have to require a person to have a physician's referral to see them. And that gives access to the people that need the service.

However it goes on to state as well that, because the health districts are the major employers, that a health district may say that they will require their patients to receive a referral from a doctor. And that's the part that we have a problem with, Mr. Speaker, because what it does do is tend to not to have a consistent service right across the province. And some districts may opt to letting their residents receive the service without a referral, and others might choose to have their residents get a referral from a doctor, which can cause some problems.

And the reason the districts do that might be for a number of reasons, whether its financing because the province has

downloaded to the health districts and they don't have the necessary funding to do all the things that they would want to.

So that's our major concern, Mr. Speaker, and we'll be addressing that in Committee of the Whole, as well as the issue of accountability by the council and all the ramifications that the council and the association may have in the event that they bring forward a concern of a resident who maybe hasn't been treated just the way they should by a therapist. But I think we can deal with those in questioning in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 15

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 15 — The Department of Health Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 53 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Next to me is Bill Jones, the deputy minister of Finance. Behind Bill is Len Rog, the assistant deputy minister of the revenue division. Behind me is Doug Lambert, the director of the revenue programs branch.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Minister. Welcome to your officials to review these two Bills this afternoon.

Minister, as I understand it, the purpose of the tobacco tax amendment plan really is sort of related to the E&H (education and health) Bill as well. What it does is makes up for the revenue that would be lost as a result of the E&H Bill moving from 9 to 7 per cent, and this then offsets it and changes the way you calculate some of these taxes in relationship to the cigars and that sort of thing. Is that the thrust of what this Bill really is about?

(1515)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chair, the intent of the Bill is because the sales tax is coming down. If we didn't do anything, the cost of tobacco products would also drop. And we know there's a lot of health risks associated with lowering tobacco prices; so this means that tobacco prices just stay even, to where they would have been without the tax cut.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, another area that I would like to get some information on is how this impacts on relationships and agreements that you have with other provinces in terms of the whole issue that was very much in the fore not very long ago and I'm speaking of tobacco smuggling — primarily from eastern Canada — and I believe that there's an undertaking or an agreement that our government has with Manitoba, or some kind of an understanding as to prevent smuggling, and how does that work?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, this has no impact on that situation.

Mr. Gantefer: — I realize that this Bill *per se* does not have impact in that it hasn't changed what the price of tobacco is, but I'm asking the question about what the relationship is in terms of us . . . our agreements with other provinces in terms of the issues of smuggling, and has that become a greater or lesser extent with the tobacco prices essentially being maintained by this legislation at the status quo?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, as you probably know, when eastern . . . the federal government and the governments in eastern Canada lowered tobacco taxes, the western Canadian governments decided to work together to ensure that we did not lower tobacco taxes and prices. And we have cooperated on enforcing the law and we have seen no major smuggling problems as a result of the lower . . . the higher tobacco taxes here.

Mr. Gantefer: — You've indicated that there is no major . . . Is there . . . Has there been any analysis by your department in terms of what opportunity there is for tobacco prices before the smuggling? Is there a threshold that you've identified as where you increase the risk of smuggling in some significant way? And I wanted to know if that's been analysed.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, we have not identified any particular threshold. I think the main thing that we look at is the revenue and the revenue has been basically stable throughout this period. So it looks like there is no significant concern about tobacco prices and there's no significant smuggling activity.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, one of the great concerns I think we all have surrounding the issue of tobacco and the effect tax on tobacco has on consumption is the concern about what . . . the high incidence of young people starting to smoke. Has your department done any analysis, perhaps in conjunction with the Department of Health, that makes some relationship between the level of taxation on tobacco products and the likelihood of young people starting to smoke?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I know that information does exist and various national organizations have I think, pretty well proven a relationship between the price of tobacco products and young people smoking. That is, if tobacco products are cheap, it's more likely that young people will smoke. Contrarily, if we keep tobacco prices up as this Bill is intending to do, it's less likely that young people will smoke.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I have no further questions on this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 54 — The Education and Health Tax
Amendment Act, 1997 (No. 2)**

Clauses 1 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 53 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 1997

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

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

**Bill No. 54 — The Education and Health Tax
Amendment Act, 1997**

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

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

(1530)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Labour
Vote 20**

Item 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a few concerns here this afternoon regarding occupational health and safety as well as some of the items that are placed under the occupational health and safety subvote.

To begin with, I note that there's a slight increase in the amount of monies that's spent on the Office of the Workers' Advocate, who assists claimants with such things as Workers' Compensation Board claims. Would you be able to provide us some indication as to what sort of workload the Workers' Advocate has faced in the last couple of years and what sort of a case-load that you'd estimate that you would have for the upcoming year?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, this is information which I just don't have with me at the moment but I'd be very pleased to provide the information in written form in the next day or two, if that's okay with the member.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, also with respect to the Workers' Advocate, who operates at arm's length from the department, if the minister would also be able to provide us . . . or tell us what provisions, if any, are in place to allow clients that are using those services to offer feedback on the quality of such services; so that if there's any improvements or reforms that might be necessary, that they could be so noted and undertaken. Perhaps the minister might be able to comment on that sort of a feedback mechanism here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think that that kind of a mechanism is important. I know that the Workers' Advocate office is used generally, not only by injured workers themselves but by their representatives, in the case of trade unions, and by members of this legislature who have cases that come to them involving injured workers and they have the opportunity to use the Workers' Advocate office. A feedback mechanism is necessary, and of course it's been going on for years as a matter of course. But I agree with the member that an organized approach to this question is probably desirable.

As to the specific measures that are in place, again I can include in the memoranda that I'm going to send to the member an answer to his question in detail.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. We look forward to those comments as well in the future.

Coming from a rural area, most of the people in my constituency are self-employed, either as farmers or ranchers or small-business people. And in their roles as self-employed persons, many are quite concerned about occupational health and safety.

Earlier in the year, as the minister is well aware, my colleague, the member from Wood River, launched the pothole patrol program to give people an opportunity to express their concerns about the overall state of our highways, including the potholes but not just restricted to potholes. Since that campaign was launched, many people in my constituency have taken the time to write me about their concerns.

Now several of them actually make their living as bus drivers, and they've written to me and they've expressed some rather grave concern about our highways. They're concerned about the maintenance of those highways in unseasonable conditions, and they're worried about, just about the general upkeep of such things as potholes during the rest of the year. Now they're concerned, Mr. Chairman, because they fear for their own safety while on the job, but they also . . . they fear for the safety of the children that they're transporting to and from school.

And I was wondering if the minister would be able to explain if there's any steps that his department is taking to address these sorts of concerns and to attack the growing occupational health and safety hazard that's posed by our crumbling highways.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we have no particular program in place to address the situation that the member raises. We have all sorts of programing about occupational health and safety matters and the member will know the rather

voluminous regulations that were brought down in September of last year covering all sorts of situations and covering this one in a general way, but nothing specifically with respect to the condition of the highways.

And I must say to the member that this problem, cast in the way that he has cast it, has not occurred to me. But it is a matter that ought to be reflected upon and determine what, if any, steps could be taken in the department to assist drivers who find themselves in the situation that the member refers to.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now another thought is one with respect to what your department might do to mitigate damages that are being caused by the Department of Municipal Government, given that they've recently announced some cuts to municipal grants. There's fears that this will make it more difficult for municipalities to keep their roads maintained, and poorly maintained roads like highways pose an occupational safety hazard for the bus drivers and our children, as I've stated and as the minister has acknowledged here this afternoon.

So just additionally I would wonder if the minister might make some comment that perhaps there are some steps that he and his department might take to convince the Municipal Government of this very occupational health and safety hazard that we have pointed out this afternoon, and what ways that you might be able to undertake to help mitigate the harm that's being done.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well to respond in a very general way, the member will be aware of course of the announcements that have been made with respect to our highways program for this fiscal year and for the next 10 years. And the member will also be aware of the policy paper that was recently released by the minister. So that while this is clearly a problem, made so by a number of factors, we are on the way to dealing with it as best we can, given the fiscal situation and the limitations that that imposes.

From the point of view of the occupational health and safety division, we are prepared to respond to any situation that is brought to our attention to the best of our ability.

Going back to the member's previous question with respect to the bus drivers, it is difficult to know what it is that we could do to help them. You know the bus drivers are very skilled people. They require a certain skill level before they are licensed to drive their buses and it's difficult for us to know how we could help them to better protect themselves from any of the hazards that they face.

Surely the member wouldn't suggest that we give them another driving course or something like that. I rather think the member is poking a bit of fun at me — his real point being the condition of the roads. The member will know that from the point of view of the occupational health and safety division in the Department of Labour, you're aiming at the wrong people.

But having said that, I want to say that we're prepared in any work situation to try and see what we can do to intervene in any appropriate ways to try and resolve the problem.

Now I may have misinterpreted the member's motives entirely when I suggested that he was poking at me with respect to something that would better be directed at another minister, and I in turn would simply reiterate this, reiterate this — the occupational health and safety program is a flagship program of this government, something on which we place great emphasis and it's no joking matter as far as we're concerned.

And I say to the member quite sincerely that if there's anything we can do to help anyone deal with their work situation and actually improve it, we are quite prepared to do that. And I think the member appreciates that.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Mr. Minister, I suppose I have been caught this afternoon, but just trying to highlight what we see as some very serious concerns. And perhaps if your department would be of any assistance in helping to mitigate some of these problems with the various departments of government — Highways being one, Municipal Government, as we've outlined, as well — certainly as you've acknowledged, the safety concerns for both children and for bus drivers are very real ones and I think they're ones that everyone shares, and it's just a matter of how seriously we choose to attack these problems.

But if I could turn now to something that we spoke about rather at length the last session we had, and it was with respect to The Labour Standards Act and how it's affected some of the parents with respect to having to pay some back-pays to babysitters who have come into their homes to babysit their children.

Would you be able to, this afternoon, provide us with any sort of update as to where that situation would be at this present time — how many total claims are in and how many have actually . . . how many parents have actually had to make payments; if those payments have actually been temporarily put on hold until there's some further resolution in this matter.

And also, has there been any further thought given towards placing a, I guess a moratorium, if you'd have it, on the period of time in which claims will be allowed to be made? Has there been a significant decrease in the numbers of claims that have been coming in as of late and therefore would lead one to think that perhaps this whole matter could be brought to a conclusion a little bit sooner than perhaps what you may have stated earlier? If you might be able to just make some comments in that regard.

The Chair: — I see that the minister's officials have joined him. I would ask him to introduce the officials that have joined him, please.

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Joining me is Sandra Morgan, the deputy minister of the department.

As to the member's question, let me relay the number of matters in response to his remarks. We continue to monitor this situation, as the member will know. We have received in the labour standards offices a total of 40 complaints to this point.

There has only been one new complaint in the last three months; 27 of these complaints have been settled and 13 remain outstanding.

We have not considered the question of a cut-off date or anything like that. Our method of approaching this problem has been publicly stated and is well known. We are monitoring. We are at some point going to be in a position to decide the question of compensation.

We have been petitioned all around from the parents, from the member himself, from others, that this is a situation where there ought to be a compensation program. We have not discussed that matter at all in the sense that there's no proposal now before the cabinet or being considered as to compensation. But when we reach a point where we think we have enough facts at our disposal, we will put the matter for decision by the cabinet and by the government.

One of the aspects of this situation which I find most concerning is that a compensation program is complicated by the fact that the people who were in compliance with the law at the time that this matter arose are out there somewhere, and we don't know who they are or what kind of wages they were paying to their care-givers.

I think you have to consider that, because if you don't, you're in the position of having . . . of saying well, we'll compensate the people who were in breach of the law and who have now complied with the law, we'll compensate them, without any consideration for the people who were in compliance with the law and were obeying it. And there is something very illogical about that, that you would compensate the offenders, however innocent they were, and not compensate the compliers, who you don't even know about at this stage. And frankly I don't know how we get over that problem. I'm trying to take advice on it, trying to find a way through it, but obviously it remains a matter of some concern.

Now the present status is that we continue to monitor it and at some point, and I can't tell the member when at this point, we will have to make a decision on it.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Minister, I do undertake that I will be presenting some more petitions on behalf of those affected by this particular regulation. And we also do show some sympathy to those who, as you say, those unknown who have been in compliance with the regulation. But it seems to me that a lot of the problems go towards what was a lack of . . . ineffective communication policy or initiative, if you wish to call it, on the part of the department right from the outset. And perhaps in order to undertake to determine who has been in compliance, it's something that the communication and policy branch of your department should be giving some serious consideration towards.

And also given that there has been a number of reports that other government agencies were also not acting in a manner which was consistent with the law regarding the babysitter pay, I, like other people in the province, found that disturbing, that

the government would change regulations and then not abide by their own policies.

And I'm wondering if the minister might explain on how many occasions government departments or agencies have violated these same provisions of The Labour Standards Act? And in addition, might the minister be able to tell us what changes in fact that are being made to the communication policies of the department to better communicate with other departments as well as with the public, and would serve to also answer some of my concerns towards your comments with respect to those who have complied with this particular regulation as well. So if we could just have your comments on that please, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm going to deal with the second point first. As far as we know, none of the departments are in violation of the law. I'm just not familiar with how Social Services structure their allowances or their payments so I don't know to what extent that creates any kind of problems for social welfare recipients. But Social Services itself doesn't hire any care-givers so they were not directly in violation.

And the member could probably raise that question with my colleague when his estimates are before the House as to how that's figured by them. I personally don't know.

With respect to information and the communications, I have publicly admitted that the law was not very well communicated at the time. And that's a tough one. We communicated with all of the employers in the province, of which we had notice, where we knew the name of the employer and the address of the employer, and were able to do that through the mailing lists of the Workers' Compensation Board.

We can send out notice of any change in the law to all of the employers in the province in that manner, that is to say all of the employers who are paying premiums or are listed as employers by the Workers' Compensation Board.

Persons employing babysitters for example are not covered by workers' compensation and they're not known to the board. So we miss all those people and we have no mechanism around by which we can identify them. They don't have to register anywhere; they don't have to identify themselves to any public office. So we simply don't know that they exist.

We, in connection with the labour standards legislation and regulations, consulted widely. And we had meetings all over the place. Again the people attending those meetings were employers or representatives of employer organizations or chambers of commerce. And again no contact between them and the employers of babysitters.

So our communication efforts in connection with the 1995 laws were dealt with in the way I've just described, which is the traditional way of getting that information out.

You would have to be in some kind of expert I think, or watching for the point, to have detected the change in the law and the effect that would have upon people employing babysitters. Nobody picked it up. We didn't pick it up in

government. I've openly admitted the error that was made. And I think that if we had communicated in a way more thorough than the way in which I've described, we would have missed them anyway.

We would have missed the employers of babysitters because we had not intended to affect that situation. We did, but we hadn't intended to. And when we learned what we had done, we changed the regulations to exclude them. So it's hard to know what kind of communication strategy we could have taken to avoid the problem.

I think in the future we will use more general advertising than we have, which is to say newspaper advertising. But we're conscious, as you know, as we will do that, we are conscious of the fact that not everybody reads newspapers. In the cities, I think the percentage is very low, the people who subscribe to and read their daily newspapers. So it is a big problem; it has always been a big problem.

You'd be surprised how many places we go into on labour standards matters and talk to employers who have received the information every which way and yet are not in compliance with the law because they didn't know it was the law. And try as we may with people that we know, we're still having communication problems with them and always have had — always have had. Always there are employers — we uncover them practically every day — who don't realize what the law is, in spite of our best efforts to draw it to their attention. That's a problem that's common with governments everywhere.

But in this case it presented particular challenges, because we didn't know we'd made a mistake, or we wouldn't have made it. And even if we had known that the law was being changed, we would not have known how to effectively reach the people that are concerned.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just another suggestion for the minister if I could, with respect to trying to identify those who have complied. I would suggest that the vast majority of those would have been not previously classified as employers, in the strictest sense of the word, and therefore wouldn't have been making payroll remittances and such.

So certainly you might be able to search for those who have recently become such and there would be a list that you could start on in terms of trying to narrow down how many people actually complied with the babysitter regulation and therefore shouldn't be penalized, and we agree, for having complied, just as those who through no fault of theirs were not aware of it.

So I just would make that comment, because I think if there is a genuine attempt to identify those, it could be done fairly readily, actually, in that regard, and then we would have satisfied all of those who have been affected.

Just one further question if I might, though. You've touched on not knowing whether or not the Department of Social Services actually was in violation of this particular regulation. But I just, for clarification, there's something like 40 claims altogether, to date. Twenty-seven are settled, you were saying, and the

balance of 13 remaining outstanding. Are we to take it then that none of those 40 claims involve Social Services, with an employee having been of Social Services and providing care-giving services to a Social Services' client. If you could just clarify that for us, please.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll undertake to do that. I don't have that kind of information with me but just say that as far as we know — the deputy minister and I just conferring a second ago — there was only one case that involved Social Services. But we'll check into it and I'll undertake to advise the member.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, and official, welcome.

Minister, I would like to shift gears a bit and talk about the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. Last session we documented two projects specifically that indicated that there was some serious discrepancies between bids that were done in compliance with the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, which was just coming into effect, and what a free and open market tender may be.

There were two specific: one, the Humboldt-Wakaw pipeline; and the other a SaskTel renovation project. And this year, not many days and weeks ago, we outlined another project that had occurred in the north-east on a SaskPower channel enlargement project which specifically showed that the discrepancy between the tender that was accepted under the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and the tender that was made outside of that agreement for a project by a company right in the Hudson Bay area was some 30 per cent less.

Mr. Minister, at the time in the House when you were asked about that, you had made the comment, either in the House or in interviews afterwards, that the idea of reviewing the actuality of the discrepancy is something that you felt was important to do, and that you also indicated that it might not be a bad idea that this report be made public so that this issue could be clarified. And I wonder if you'd comment today.

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I stand behind the remarks I made the other day. I think it would be very useful if we could get as much of this information out as possible and investigate the situations that come up. Now it is not the function of my department to do that. It's a CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) function and I haven't had a response to them. I haven't had any information from them that could assist us on the two matters that the member raises.

I said during that time and I want to repeat here, that looking at tenders itself is not enough. Maybe in the Hudson Bay situation it is where we can assume that the tender was real. You know, it was . . . no indication to the contrary and I think that situation is one that could be usefully looked at.

I make the point though that we have to be a bit careful to just follow that process generally, comparing tenders, because the contractors who don't qualify under CCTA (Crown

Construction Tendering Agreement), are not prepared to live with CCTA, could submit any kind of bid at all, knowing that they are not going to be accepted. I'm not accusing anybody of anything, but I just enter that caution, that we should not draw any firm conclusions on the basis of simply comparing the tenders.

I've answered the question in the following way and I do so here again today, that so far as we can figure out, our costs for work done under the CCTA are not out of line. They are similar to what we think the costs should be, having regard to the costs of doing other Crown work, Crown construction work.

The member will know that most of our work is done outside CCTA, most of the public construction work, and only a small portion of it is done under the CCTA. And it's difficult to compare the costs of one project to another because each of them have got their own characteristics and their differences and it's tough to make any direct comparisons. But we're comfortable because there doesn't look to be any big discrepancy.

We also know that the wage rates being paid in the non-union as compared to the union sector are not different. In some cases, the non-union wages are higher even. There are differences in the benefit packages, and the things like travel time may get involved in some contracts and that may make a particular contract more expensive, but not hugely so, not unacceptably so. And so we're not uncomfortable with the economics of the situation.

But I stand behind what I said earlier. It would be very productive here if we could produce a document showing answers to these concerns that the opposition and people in the construction industry have about our policy, to lay the matter to rest once and for all. But at the moment I just don't have that kind of information.

Mr. Gantefer: — I appreciate, Minister, that you may not at this time have that information at hand, and I certainly appreciate . . . And perhaps I'm reading something into your remarks about saying that, number one, since you are responsible for the agreement that you will look into this numerical type of thing and have a report done; and secondly that you will make that report public so that the stakeholders that you've identified . . . not necessarily just us in the opposition, but there's a great number of people that are very concerned in the construction industry.

The Saskatchewan Construction Association of course is on record as even attempting to participate in a process that would find a way through this whole CCTA issue, and then that went off the rails because they felt that the process was in some way flawed.

I wonder, Minister, what you're going to do to get the construction association and the industry to get back together again, because it seems that the whole thing went off the rails and now we're sitting here in sort of limbo, and that seems to be a pretty unacceptable situation.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I will never clearly understand how I got to be “it” in this game around the CCTA. The agreement is negotiated through the offices of the Crown Investments Corporation, and the Crowns have a relationship with that office and not with my department. And I have absolutely nothing to do with the administration of the agreement.

The only way in which the Department of Labour got involved was when somebody suggested that the problem be mediated. And the Department of Labour knows all the mediators and had, you know, some . . . were able to put up a list and people could think about that list and determine whether anybody on there was of any interest to them. And indeed that’s how Stephen Kelleher’s name got identified, was working from our list, or working through names that had been suggested by the Department of Labour.

But in any event, here I am standing on my feet, purporting to answer for an agreement about which I have . . . over which I have no control or any real responsibility. That doesn’t mean I sit down. I mean somebody has to deal with these questions, and I’m certainly prepared to do that today.

The subject of the CCTA is being considered in the context of larger questions in the construction industry and constructive industry collective bargaining. I have had meetings recently with a Mr. McLachlin and we have begun to discuss the issues and what kind of process might be useful to try and address them. And we have had excellent meetings to this point where we seem to be headed in the right kind of directions.

I’ve also had meetings with Sid Matthews of the CLRA (Canadian Labour Relations Association of Saskatchewan). And I have just this day had a request from the building trades unions to organize a meeting with them. And I think I’ll be able to accommodate that within the next week or 10 days. So the things are afoot.

There are broader questions that are here. The novel idea of double-breasting or spinning off that’s been around this province for the 15 years is part of it because that really is the underlying problem that leads us to things like the CCTA. And the way in which the structure of bargaining in the industry which has been a problem ever since but especially so in the last 20 years — who bargains with who, and how are the agreements made, and who gets to vote on them. And generally how we keep collective bargaining going in that industry is really what’s involved, and I’m hopeful that our discussions with the parties that I’ve mentioned will lead us to some progress in these areas.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I just have a couple of question on the Workers’ Advocate. Last year, could you give me an idea of how much money Workers’ Advocate area cost in your department?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The cost for the Workers’ Advocate program in ’96-97, which would be last year, was \$267,000, made up of \$239,000 for personal services and \$28,000 for other expenses.

Ms. Draude: — Are any of the wages for personnel within the Department of Labour paid for from funds that comes through Workers’ Advocate, through workmen’s compensation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — All of the costs of the occupational health and safety program are recovered from the Workers’ Compensation Board, and the costs of the Workers’ Advocate office is covered also. And an invoice is submitted annually to the Workers’ Compensation Board for those items.

Ms. Draude: — Is there a projection given to the workmen’s compensation board for the estimated amount, or is it just an invoice that’s given at the end of the year as a done deal?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We bill the . . . we send the invoice I referred to on the basis of the costs for a calendar year — that’s as opposed to a fiscal year. The amount we bill them for is directly related to the amount in the estimates for the fiscal years that we’re considering right now. And they are paid the actual amount that we spend.

They are involved with us during the development of our budgets. There are no surprises in it. The budget that we have before the Assembly today is one that was prepared with the Workers’ Compensation Board having all kinds of opportunities to react to the proposals respecting occupational health, and the Workers’ Advocate. So there’s no surprises as far as the board is concerned.

Ms. Draude: — Was there a substantial change in the amount of money that the Workers’ Advocate charged to workmen’s compensation after ’91-92, or maybe it was ’92-93 when the deeming came in effect?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I don’t know the answer to that question but I’ll find it. We’ll have to dig back in the records and we’ll provide full information to the member in answer to that question.

Ms. Draude: — With the new OHS (occupational health and safety) regulations that are coming into effect this year, are you estimating a substantial change in the amount of funds that’ll be required to implement these?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The budget that is before the Assembly today provides for three new positions in the occupational health and safety division. The costs related to those are the increased costs. They are there in order to strengthen the division’s abilities generally and partially in response to the new regulations, but also recognizing the fact there’s a growing number of workplaces that have to serviced and it is likely the fact that the division is understaffed.

I think we have to strengthen and build up our staff in order to properly do the job that The Occupational Health and Safety Act mandates to us. The amount of the increase, my deputy minister tells me, is \$205,000 for the increases to the branch, including the three positions that I’ve referred to.

Ms. Draude: — So the \$205,000 is on top of the 239,00 for the advocate and it includes three positions, plus how many positions are already in place right now?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are no new positions being created in the Workers' Advocate office. No, none at all. The increase is in the occupational health and safety division and there are three new officers being added to that branch. And the total cost, according to the numbers I have, of that increase is \$205,000.

Ms. Draude: — So that's just the increase. Can you tell me how much the total cost of the OHS regulation . . . or OHS portion of it is, period, then?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's difficult to answer the member's question with any precision and I'll tell you why. This program has been going on for 25 years. This is the 25th anniversary of The Occupational Health and Safety Act, which was passed in 1972. And the program is ongoing.

The regulations that the member referred to are in part old news and in part new news. There was a rewrite of the regulations with new provisions included in them. And it is therefore difficult to answer the member's question in terms of how much the new regulations cost.

We know how much . . . We had a study done as to the amount they would cost the employers in this province, what would be the increased costs for the employer community as a result of the new features in the new regulations. So far as the department is concerned, the only new costs are the ones that I detailed a few moments ago — I think relatively little, but still some increase.

Ms. Draude: — Then I guess because that number isn't available, that means that it isn't fully funded then from Workers' Compensation, the OHS part of it.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's fully funded so far as the cost of the government program, occupational health and safety, is concerned. But the regulations impose certain new requirements upon employers, and as a result some of them are going to have to make some modifications to their plans. And it's that figure that we had studied before we implemented the regulations and we announced what those numbers were at the time that we announced the regulations.

But any new costs that we have as a department to administer those regulations are included in the estimates and will be paid by the Workers' Compensation Board.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, can you tell me then what the bill for the OHS regulations for last . . . or for the OHS part of it was last year, the total amount? Not just the three new employees — all of it.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I will answer that question, Mr. Chair, by telling the member the bill that we sent to the Workers' Compensation Board for 1996 . . . As I mentioned earlier, we bill them on a calendar year basis. The invoice consists of three

items. Usually it consists of two; this year it consists of three.

The occupational health and safety program, the number was \$3.845 million, rounded out. I'll give you the exact number — \$3,845,783.42. The second item was the Workers' Advocate office, and that amount was \$319,303.69. The third item was the cost during 1996 of The Workers' Compensation Act review, the review. And of course the Act provides that the board must pay the cost of that review. And the total there was \$113,143.81.

So the total billing was the sum of those three figures. It was about \$4.278 million and change. That was our bill for 1996.

Now the bill for 1997 will be larger, but based upon the numbers that we have in this year's budget and will include the same items that I've referred to, although the review I think was substantially completed in 1996. So if there's any item there, if there's any expenses there, it would be relatively little.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you tell me what the estimate was for cost per employee to implement the new OHS regulations?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm going to give the member an answer, but it's subject to some calculation because we haven't worked it out on the basis that she has asked.

We think that the cost per non-agricultural employee in the province would be about \$2 per employee per year. The cost for all of the employers in the province would be about \$10 million to comply with the new parts of the regulations.

Now as I say, that's just the best we're able to do in the few seconds that we've had, but we'll go over those numbers and if they're any different we will write to the member and tell her.

Ms. Draude: — Per employer then? Could you just give me just a ballpark figure, please?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are approximately 37,000 employers in the province, so the arithmetic is there. But that's a number, that's a number that we'll also check and write to the member.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees, Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'd like to welcome you here today and your officials, to answer questions on Labour. I want to also deal with some of the issues that have already been brought forward — the babysitter situation, CCTA.

But I have another issue that is directly related today to my constituency, and that deals with the death of Mr. Hughes in a crane accident that happened a couple of weeks ago. I'm just wondering, why is this particular circumstance being dealt with by officials of Labour Canada and the federal occupational health and safety situation. It happened in Saskatchewan. Surely our jurisdiction should at least play some role in it, and that it simply shouldn't be just a federal situation.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I appreciate the member's question and I understand it, understand his frustration and no doubt those of the family of the victim as well. And we would be pleased to play some part in it, but we're not able to.

These matters are dealt with on the basis of constitutional jurisdiction, and the federal government claims jurisdiction over interprovincial trucking enterprises. So if you have a trucking company that crosses provincial boundaries, all of the operations of that company fall within federal jurisdiction, and they assert that jurisdiction and protect it. They are quite aggressive about that.

And so in this situation, we have no option but to stand aside and let them do their thing.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Has your department . . . have you as minister approached the federal government though, to do some joint investigation and some joint jurisdiction over these particular types of circumstances? Faced a similar situation with the Shand crane accident, where it became a federal jurisdiction rather than a provincial one, even though it happened in Saskatchewan, it was working on a Saskatchewan work site.

The companies involved — I'm not familiar with the Shand one — but may have been interprovincial, but nevertheless they were working with Saskatchewan employees at a Saskatchewan work site.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We in the Saskatchewan Department of Labour are very interested in pursuing this subject with the federal government and there is some indication that we are going to be able to do that and work out some arrangements.

At the moment the negotiations are with respect to uranium mining, where there has been a federal presence, a federal jurisdiction, because the uranium mining and milling have been declared to be for the general advantage of Canada and therefore fall within federal jurisdiction.

We have asserted for years, an interest in that and it has been informally a matter that has been dealt with in a cooperative way, and we're trying to formalize that now with negotiations and an agreement. And we are quite interested. We've told the federal government we're interested and they've indicated an interest also in negotiating broader provisions that would cover all sorts of things — the operation of grain elevators, interprovincial trucking is one that you mentioned — all kinds of interprovincial transportation.

It makes no sense that one company will fall within provincial jurisdiction because it doesn't transport outside the provincial boundaries, where the truck company just next door with the same kind of operation, because it sends a truck across the border regularly, falls within federal jurisdiction. So we're interested in working out those kind of arrangements.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I would certainly encourage you to carry that out, because these are the lives and the safety of Saskatchewan people that we're talking about. In this particular case this company is running with

Saskatchewan licence plates. It may very well have licence plates with other provinces, but nevertheless I think, Mr. Minister, it behoves us to protect our Saskatchewan employees as best we can.

I'd like to now move on to the CCTA. Before I go any further, I was interested in one of the comments that you made about keeping bargaining going. I wonder, Mr. Minister, in what context you meant that or how you meant that; how does it apply in this particular case with the CCTA?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well the phenomenon of the spin-off company has created a particular problem in the construction industry so far as collective bargaining is concerned. Since the Labour Relations Board opened the door to that kind of spin-off arrangement back in the early 1980s, collective bargaining has really been threatened — in some trades almost extinguished in the province.

Every labour expert, every collective bargaining expert that I've ever talked to and many that I haven't talked to, would advise us that this kind of arrangement is just totally outside the pale. Completely beyond the pale; that it just can't be allowed to continue or can't be allowed to exist in the labour relations system.

It's as though an established company like Intercontinental Packers, for example, could escape union certification and escape their collective agreement by deciding one day to set up a new company to run their operation in Saskatoon. That wouldn't be allowed in any way, shape or form in the meat packing industry or anywhere else, and it ought not to be allowed in the construction industry.

But the precedents are clear before the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board and so it has happened. It has already happened. And it has really put collective bargaining under great stress and poses a threat to its continued existence.

We believe, we believe that collective bargaining in the construction industry ought to take place; that it ought not to be extinguished. And we've made no secret of that. I mean the CCTA itself is an example of a policy that has the effect of keeping collective bargaining alive, because it requires that there be a bargaining relationship between the contractor and the unions in order to qualify under that agreement. That's what I was referring to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess this is where you and I philosophically disagree, because I don't believe that we must have collective bargaining. I think collective bargaining should be available if that's what the employees wish to do. If they wish to organize, to unite, to bargain together, so be it — that should be their privilege. And I agree with that. But I don't think that it must occur. And that's where we differ.

It seems you have a serious complaint with spin-off companies. To my knowledge, other jurisdictions, either they don't have

spin-off companies or they don't find it a problem because only in Saskatchewan has there been a move such as the CCTA. Perhaps it deals more directly with Saskatchewan labour laws rather than with the need to protect bargaining units in Saskatchewan.

If spin-off companies are not occurring in other places across Canada — and I don't know if they are or if they're not — but if they are not, then perhaps that speaks to what the labour law is in Saskatchewan; that those corporations that do construction across Canada — and there are a number of them; they operate in various provinces, perhaps under a federal charter as we were talking about earlier with the safety standards — they don't . . . aren't spinning off companies in other provinces, perhaps because the labour standards there allow them to operate and still allow bargaining to take place.

Yet in Saskatchewan it seems to be a problem because of the way the labour standards are written that companies are trying to avoid some of the more stringent or Draconian measures within Saskatchewan's labour law.

I think that's where the problem lies, Mr. Minister, not in the fact that we must have bargaining but rather in the fact that Saskatchewan labour law almost forces companies into that position whether their employees want it or not. And I think that is a major part of what's happened in this province.

If you talk to a number of employers in the construction industry, they'll tell you that when they're on a non-union site, in a lot of cases, their employee holds a union card but isn't trying to unionize that particular work site, but rather simply wants to be employed. So, Mr. Minister, it's not always the situation where all sites must be unionized. Many can operate without it and do so very effectively.

When we talk about the CCTA, you see a particular benefit in there for the unionized employees. And if I can paraphrase some of the things that have been said in the past, during this session, during the last session — and you can correct me if I take the wrong interpretation of your words — is that the benefits of the CCTA are: first, employment; secondly, wages and benefits to the employees that they be on a par with the union negotiated contracts, travel, and accommodations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you can indicate whether or not my summation of what the CCTA provides as a benefit is what you would agree is what those benefits are, or what you're at least trying to achieve.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll deal with the both of those questions.

First of all, the member's got it exactly wrong, exactly backwards. The spin-off companies just simply aren't allowed in any other province. Their labour relations board wouldn't allow it. They simply would laugh — would laugh — at an employer who would pretend to escape a union certification just by spinning off a new corporate entity.

The other provinces would gather those together and treat them

as one employer, and that includes the province of Ontario, the province of Manitoba — even the province of Alberta wouldn't allow such a thing as this. And yet Saskatchewan's labour laws during the 1980s were just not up to it.

The repeal of the previous construction bargaining Act, was the very point on which the labour relations board at the time decided that in Saskatchewan you could spin off. So as a result, most of the . . . well, practically all of the big contractors created spin-off companies, and away they went, and the unions were left holding an empty bag.

Now that's, you know . . . Kelleher says we should amend our law to take care of that situation. We thought we had taken care of it back in 1992 with the enactment of The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, but evidently we haven't. Kelleher recommends we patch up that hole, and the member will know that we have not yet responded to the Kelleher report because we have not yet finished our consultations with respect to the recommendations that were contained in it.

Now as to the benefits of the CCTA; there are, I think, a number. One of the reasons why we're interested in a continued union presence in the construction industry is the contribution that they make to the apprenticeship program. It is in the public interest of this province that we have skilled tradespeople here, that we have apprentices, that we have journeypeople, and that there be a progression through the ranks of the apprenticeship in order to produce some more and more tradespeople.

We need them now. We need them at any time that there is a significant level of construction in this province. Some of the trades are now running short and we simply must have a system in place to continue to produce these tradespeople.

I'm not arguing that only where there is a trade union can you have a successful apprenticeship program. But in the building trades, the unions have been central to that program. They have provided the focus and the energy and the attention that's needed and we believe that their continued presence is important for that reason. So we encourage trade union employment by the CCTA; and in that connection, we encourage . . . we help to encourage and to strengthen the apprenticeship program.

The CCTA also helps to ensure that Saskatchewan people are employed on construction in this province. And anyone working under the collective agreements in Saskatchewan have a hiring procedure laid out in the collective agreement. And that ensures that Saskatchewan tradespeople have access to construction industry jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. I think that's a worthy benefit.

It has been argued that it ensures a certain level of wages and benefits. But as collective bargaining has weakened in the construction industry and as the use of non-union labour in the construction industry has developed in the way that it has, very often the union rates are higher than the — pardon me, the non-union rates are higher than the union rates. And we know that to be the case.

Now the benefit packages can vary and get arguments about how these things should be costed out, but that's not a major impact of the CCTA at this time.

Travel and accommodation provisions are higher under the collective agreements than they are outside the collective agreements, and on some jobs that can make a difference. I know that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Any time that something costs more for one than it does for the other, obviously there's a cost . . . an extra cost built into the project and that is picked up, in this particular case with the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, only by the taxpayers.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could clarify something for me? You mentioned certifications for the trades apprenticeships. Right now who certifies someone, let's say, as a journeyman carpenter?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's done by the department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So really then, Mr. Minister, that could be done through some other avenue other than through the union process. If someone wanted to, do they have to go through an apprenticeship, or can they simply write an exam for the journeyman if they have worked with a carpenter some place?

I know within the electrical trades that you have to work with a journeyman electrician for a certain amount of time, write I think it's three exams over that period of time, and then you're entitled to write — not necessarily you're going to pass — but entitled to write for your journeyman electrician ticket.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, the requirements, as I recall them, are that you have to have a certain . . . you have to enrol in the program and get your required hours in the program, take your required training at the appropriate time, pass your exams at each level. And at the end of the day, when you've completed the academic part of your training and logged the number of hours that you have to log, then you become entitled to your journeyman certification.

Now I'm not arguing that it is essential that trade unions be involved. I mean, there are many parts of the system, the apprenticeship system, where there are no trade unions involved at all. What is important is that you have somebody at the table, at the advisory board tables, to make these programs work, to keep the flow of apprentices coming into the trade and going through the trades.

And in the construction industry, the building trades have been very much a part of that — a very, very important part of it. And indeed they've built their whole . . . in some cases their whole collective agreement and their whole compensation system around the apprenticeship program. We would hate to lose that. We would all be worse off if we were to lose that element of the apprenticeship program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While it might be of benefit to have the unions involved in that, it certainly doesn't seem to be a prerequisite or the sole means by which to achieve an apprenticeship program, and at the end of the day, a journeyman in whatever trade that might be.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if there is a report out there about the CCTA? Last year while we were in session, the member from Rosetown, the minister in charge of CIC, kept telling us: we're preparing our report; there's a study going on; it will come down on day X.

Well, Mr. Minister, when day X arrived, all of a sudden the study was postponed. It will come down now on day Y, which was approximately a month later than day X. It comes to day Y all of a sudden there is no study. We don't have a study. How could we give you the discussions on a study? How could we give you the results of a study when there is no study? But on two different occasions dates were set for the release of a study.

Mr. Minister, was there an incomplete study done that would have contributed to the minister from Rosetown saying that a study will be presented on day X and Y?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I don't know. I wasn't aware of what the member has just said. As I explained earlier, this is really not my business. I protest having been drawn into this issue, but here I stand anyway. I'll try and learn the correct situation and advise the member, but I can't tell you as I stand here today.

(1645)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, it just seemed that as this issue become hotter and hotter during the last session, the less and less willing the minister from Rosetown was to present a study. So finally at the end of the day, he made a determination that there was no study to be presented even though on two different . . . he had two different dates set to release it.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could give us a list, and give the costs of all the contracts awarded by Crown corporations pursuant to the CCTA?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I have no such information. I will take it up with the minister responsible, but I have none of the information that the member asks for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, perhaps the minister should call in the member from Rosetown and he could help you as an official to answer these questions and provide the information. It seems that he should be the one answering the questions on the Assembly floor, and yet he doesn't come forward in this Assembly to answer those kinds of questions. The fact is, I don't believe he has an estimate that does come forward on the floor of the Assembly. And yes, there's the opportunity in the Crown Corporations Committee, and that's always a year or two down the road. And I have questioned him, but those were for the numbers for 1985.

So now we would like to have something that's a little more relevant to 1997, Mr. Minister. Would it be possible to get these kind of lists from you from the minister for CIC, because we're looking for lists of the contracts and the costs, what they were awarded, and which projects they were, etc.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't know whether I'll be able to do that or not. I'm conscious of the role that I play here as the minister responsible for this particular department, and I don't know whether I'm even permitted to make any kind of an undertaking with respect to the matter such as the member raises.

But I have an interest in this because I seem to be the one that's questioned all the time with respect to it, and I would like to make it go away. It may be that the member's question provides me with some useful thoughts on how this matter might move towards some kind of completion. But at the moment I don't think I can give the undertaking that the member asks for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'll give you some more lists to try and find out about. And that would be the list of all the tenders that were put forward on those CCTA contracts and whether or not those bids were accepted.

I know the minister answered the member from Thunder Creek about this particular issue, about those non-unionized contractors that tender on the CCTA projects, and the minister's concern that they're underbidding, that those are false bids, that they really have no intentions of ever winning those bids so that they can low-ball them and try to make political hay and make the CCTA look bad.

Well, Mr. Minister, it's working. Because the CCTA does look bad. You may be comfortable with it, but nobody else is in the province other than perhaps the unionized people and the unionized contractors.

But, Mr. Minister, if you believe that these tenders are unrealistically low, that they're low-balling, that they have no intentions of filling those contracts at that price, why not accept one of them? If you just did one and the person, whoever had submitted that tender, won the tender and lost a lot of money on it, you can be assured that they would not be back again to do it again a second time.

But because you don't do that, you leave the assumption out there that these are valid tenders and that now you have a big disparity between the one you accepted and something else that was on the tender list. And those look like they're running in the neighbourhood of 20 to 30 per cent difference between those two costs.

And the British Columbia experience was that CCTA . . . that a similar project to CCTA in that province, in the highway construction industry, amounted to about a 30 per cent increase in the cost to highways to build their roads under a similar arrangement.

And in many cases in the tenders that come forward in Saskatchewan . . . We've seen it with SaskTel in Regina here

on a project worth 2 or \$300,000, another project up in the north-east, the Melfort pipe line, all of those examples was a significant difference between the private contractor, non-unionized, that tendered, and the unionized contractor that got the job. It was a significant amount of percentage difference between those two costs.

So, Mr. Minister, I think it's very important that these numbers be provided and that it's very important that you take one of these bids — just one; that's all you have to take. If the thought is out there that if we low-ball a bid on there, somebody's going to accept it and we're going to lose a lot of money on it, nobody's going to want to take it, take that chance that they might . . . it might be their project that's accepted. If they're not low-balling and those prices are realistic, they'll be back again the next time around when you have a construction project.

And then you will know, we will know, and the public will know whether or not your CCTA is actually costing the taxpayers money or whether or not it is . . . as you say that you're comfortable with it, that it's not costing the taxpayers money, that it's fair for everybody.

But until you take one of those contracts, Mr. Minister, the vast majority of taxpaying Saskatchewan people don't believe it. They believe CCTA costs them money out of their pocket.

You have the opportunity, Mr. Minister, to let them know. You have the opportunity to let the construction industry know that if you're low-balling your bids, you're going to pay for it. So give them the opportunity, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I've listened carefully to what the member has said, and I'll give all of that some consideration, mindful of the fact that it doesn't fall within my area of ministerial responsibility.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, you're the only minister in here that we get a chance to present these recommendations to.

I'd like to deal a little further with the Kelleher report, and you mentioned Mr. Kelleher just a little bit earlier. And the Saskatchewan Construction Association, the SCA did not participate in the consultations that went into the recent Kelleher review of the CCTA because the review had not been given the mandate to look at the issues that concerned them.

Why did you go ahead with the review when one of the two major participants had walked away from the table?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The process started as I recall in July. And it was some . . . Kelleher was right into it and it was some considerable time before we learned that the SCA had a problem with the terms of reference. Then as we . . . When we learned that and investigated that aspect of the situation we . . . it became clear to us that there was a misunderstanding right at the beginning of the process; that the ministers who were involved at the time did not agree that double-breasting or spin-off would not be a subject to be addressed, but the SCA thought that they had made it clear that that would have to be a

prerequisite. So there was sort of miscommunication there.

Then when the matter came to my attention in the fall of the year, when the process was well under way, how would you go about remedying it? If you alter the terms of reference to take spin-offs out, you lose the other party, you lose the building trades, because that's their main issue. And they had made no bones about that.

They had in fact tabled that issue at the time when the parties were actually meeting each other head on, when the SCA and the building trades were meeting with CIC representatives in the room and talking about problems they had with the CCTA. It was right on the table. And if you suddenly . . . if I then came along and tried to snatch it off the table, I would lose that side.

It was a non-winning situation. There was no easy way out of it. I met with the construction association a couple of times to try and find a way through this difficulty and keep the mediation going with everyone participating, but I couldn't do it.

Now I must say quite bluntly that I don't understand the position that they took. I mean there was an opportunity there for everybody to put all their issues on the table before one of Canada's real experts and try and use his mediating abilities to work out some compromises in the situation, or at least to get his best judgement on how issues ought to be resolved. And I frankly don't know why SCA took the position that they did. I regret it and I wish they'd stayed in the process. But they didn't and there didn't seem to be anything I could do to either keep them there or to change the situation so they would stay there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well the Kelleher report made seven recommendations on how to fix the CCTA — five of which had been suggested by the SCA before they left the table. Which of these have you acted on or which ones are you going to act on?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer is none. The recommendations are still in front of us and we've shipped — long since — shipped the report out to the people who are interested and we've had some responses, but not all, by any means. It may well be — and I believe it to be the case — that the meeting that I'm to have with the building trade sometime in the next 10 days will address their response to the Kelleher report. I don't know that, but I assume that that's what they want to meet with me about.

The SCA, the Saskatchewan Construction Association, has responded without prejudice to their position on the spin-off issue, and it is a detailed response. And that is the only detailed response that I've had to this point. So we're not doing anything about it at the moment except encouraging the people to get back to us and tell us where they stand. We'd like to get as much consensus as we could on some of these issues.

Some of them would be addressed through amendments to the CCTA, and the legislative package, I think will have to wait until the next session because we're already into May and it's a little late to start introducing legislation of such a major nature at this stage.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the items that Kelleher noted in his report was that the CCTA should not be used as an organizing tool by the unions. His recommendation was that any certification votes affecting a non-union company under CCTA should only apply to the project.

Now I know that you haven't made any decisions on this yet, but what is your opinion, what is the government's opinion, on this recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I will answer the question in the following way. We haven't made any decisions about . . . we haven't . . . I haven't recommended anything to cabinet with respect to the provisions of it. I have some personal views on it but they're not really relevant to what the government may do, except they will receive my recommendation and consider it.

I mentioned the SCA response in my previous answer and it was I think negative with respect to all of the recommendations. So getting consensus on this may be some kind of a trick, but we do need a lot more consultation than we've had so far.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Another one of Kelleher's recommendations was that the 21 cent an hour check-off for non-union employees working under the CCT . . . that this check-off was essentially a slush fund for the unions.

He recommended that these monies be moved to a fund to help all construction workers, not just unionized ones, and he suggested putting it into the apprenticeship and skills training program. I think that one, Mr. Minister, has a lot of merit to it. That those monies that are taken from the non-unionized employees . . . or non-unionized employers, excuse me, 21 cents an hour for all their employees, not be turned over to the union — obviously those people are not union members — but that it be put into the apprenticeship programs to benefit all construction workers, not just those that are unionized.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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