

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens from the communities of Yarbo and Gerald in the province of Saskatchewan:

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 every pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present a petition, 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 community involved is Odessa, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

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

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm just absolutely delighted, Mr. Speaker, to introduce this fine, fine group of young people seated in the west gallery to my colleagues.

There are 86 students there, Mr. Speaker, and they are from a

very special school, St. Angela Merici. Now this school provides me the service of delivering a newsletter in my constituency every month and so I've got to know many of the students well. And it's such a pleasure to see them here today, And I know that they also have a very warm spot in their heart for my friend, the member from Regina Dewdney.

They're accompanied by their teachers, Laurianne Jacques, Elaine Giroux-Sylvestre, Jim Walker, and Sean Chase. And a group of that size certainly needs some chaperons and they are Yvonne Wagner, Brenda Yeske, Greg Marshall, Annette McFarlane. And they are also accompanied by Yvonne Richards, Roy Schneider, Mrs. Jakeman, Denise McLachlan, and Ann Zerr.

Now they're going to spend some time here in the gallery and they are then going to have a tour, and after that we're all going to meet in room 218 for drinks and questions.

So please join me in extending a warm welcome to this fine group of students from St. Angela Merici School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and all members of the legislature, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a group from all over Saskatchewan — Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Indian Head, and a number of other communities around Saskatchewan that are here today, very interested in today's proceedings. They are a group which has a great deal of concern, Mr. Speaker, with the no-fault insurance program here in Saskatchewan. They call themselves the victims of no-fault insurance.

And I'd ask all member to please welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as the member for Regina Qu'Appelle mentioned, I have some relationship with the students from St. Angela Merici School, who I too must say are very special people, and certainly very special to me. Until recently I was a teacher there at this school and in fact had the opportunity to teach some of the students when I was subbing for some teachers . . . for a couple of teachers who were not able to be there.

I want to join with members in the House and ask them once again to join me in saying a very warm welcome to these students from St. Angela's School. I've not been away long but I miss them already and it's nice to see them here, and I hope that they enjoy their visit with us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of this Assembly, my wife, Jeanette, who has joined me today and has taken a day off from seeding to be

with us today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Chrétien Speaks to Regina Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning the Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien became the first Prime Minister of Canada to address the Regina Chamber of Commerce. He told a large and enthusiastic audience that this election is about reaffirming our values in the kind of Canada we want to see in the next century. A Canada which, if the Liberals are asked to lead us again, will include a balanced budget, the preservation of medicare, a vigorous attack on child poverty, and a renewed commitment to job training and job creation.

The Prime Minister told us that Canada has the strongest economy of all the G-7 members and has recently been described by *Time* magazine as the envy of the world.

Mr. Speaker, while the NDP (New Democratic Party) are recalling their election platform to correct their wrong figures, and Jean Charest is busy with his barbecue — still at the old Tory tricks of cooking the books — Canadians know who they can trust.

Mr. Speaker, this hand was shaken this morning by the Prime Minister of Canada and for the rest of the day I will make it available to other members to touch, who may not have been as fortunate as me to meet this great Canadian.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Books presented to the Prime Minister

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a rare event but I do agree with the member for North Battleford that the Prime Minister is in Regina today, and it has something to do with the election. And I am told that at one of his events he was presented with books by authors who are also teachers at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina.

And I wonder if anyone told the Prime Minister that he would not have to pay any PST (provincial sales tax) as opposed to the GST (goods and services tax) on those books, because they were purchased in a province that encourages reading — even of “red books,” Mr. Speaker.

And I wonder if anyone told him that to get the available sunlight he would have to start reading them an hour earlier in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And after all, this is foreign territory to him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Students in the Canada World Youth Exchange Program

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would

like to recognize two constituents of mine, Ryan Germain and Todd Hartlaub of Humboldt, who have been selected for the Canada World Youth Exchange Program.

They will be heading to opposite ends of Canada and opposite sides of the world. Ryan will be in Newfoundland and Jamaica, while Todd will be in British Columbia and then Indonesia.

Both students attend the University of Saskatchewan and start their exchange in September. Between now and that time they are required to raise \$1,500 from the community. The fund-raising is an integral part of Canada World Youth Exchange Program though it covers only a portion of the total costs.

And I commend Ryan and Todd on this endeavour. We look forward to hearing from them when they get back to certainly educate us on everything they have been educated on. Congratulations, Ryan Germain and Todd Hartlaub.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spinal Health Care Week

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was a civilian kindergarten teacher 10 years ago, I stood with my class along the Trans-Canada Highway east of Regina on a cold February morning and watched my students high five Rick Hansen as he rolled by on his round the world “Man in Motion Tour.” It was a thrilling moment for them and for me as well.

As we all know, Rick Hansen was a young man confined to a wheelchair by a spinal injury and he was circling the globe to call attention to and raise money for spinal research. At the same time, he inspired others with spinal injuries to lead their lives to the fullest with their disability, not despite it. In a decade typified by selfishness, he showed the world a selfless devotion to the welfare of others that was a much needed tonic.

And today, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that Rick Hansen is back. He is back in Regina and at a very appropriate time. Appropriate because the week of May 1 to May 7 has been declared Spinal Health Care Week, a week in which students in particular are taught about spinal health and the benefits of preventing spinal injuries.

Eight of ten Canadians will have back pain in their lives. It has been estimated that back pain costs \$6 billion a year. Education on proper spinal care can help prevent back pain. Research like that promoted by Rick Hansen will lead some day to a cure for spinal injury. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recreation Volunteers Honoured

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, April 26 the North Central Regional Recreation Association recognized 11 long-term recreation volunteers at Ed's Inn. The Special Service Award went to Michael Dutchak of Blaine Lake, and Murray and Louise Smail of Christopher Lake.

David Howe of Marcelin and Leona Neufeld of Rosthern were

awarded by North Central Regional Recreation Association for the sports category. The Recreation Award went to Henry Borysiuk of Paddockwood, Bill and Rose Palibroda of Weirdale, and Debby Hydamacka of Meath Park. The final award went to Don and Irma Brunson of Holbein for culture.

Mr. Speaker, it is people like them who make Saskatchewan such a great province to live in. Once again, I would like to say hats off to those people who dedicated their many years of volunteer service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Polonia Dance Ensemble Performance

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend on Saturday evening the Polonia Dance Ensemble of Regina, a group to which I used to belong just a few short years ago, held their ninth annual performance of Polish folk song and dance here at the Performing Arts Centre in Regina.

Almost 400 patrons were treated to a cross-section of lively Polish folk dance, which included famous national dances such as the Oberek, Kujawiak, Krakowiak, and Mazur, combined with a lively set of regional dances such as the Lubeski, Sacz, Cieszynski, Kaszubski Suites.

This year's guest group were Les danseurs de la rivière La Vielle from Gravelbourg, Mr. Speaker, a group which I'm sure is familiar to the hon. member from Wood River.

Mr. Speaker, this annual program of the Polonia Dance Ensemble of Regina coincides with the May 3 Constitution Day holiday celebrated in Poland and in Polish communities throughout the world. The Polonia Dance Ensemble is affiliated with the Polish Canadian Cultural Club of Regina and St. Anthony's Parish of Regina.

Last July they represented Canada at the prestigious International Festival of Polish Folk Dance in Rzeszów, Poland.

The Polonia Dance Ensemble are great ambassadors of Saskatchewan and Regina, and I wish to remind my hon. colleagues that next year will be their 10th anniversary performance, which should be a very special event. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agri-food Industry Diversification

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's evidence throughout Saskatchewan that our agri-food industry is diversifying. A few weeks ago my colleague from Battleford-Cut Knife mentioned a new pelleting plant that is being built in the Wilkie area. This is welcome news for grain and livestock producers in the region.

Yesterday a similar announcement was made regarding the building of a new plant in Melville. Construction of the new plant will commence sometime this spring and should be

completed by this fall. Mr. Speaker, a \$200,000 portion of this start-up cost for the new plant is being contributed by the agri-food equity fund, which we all know was established to assist Saskatchewan companies finance new and value added agricultural businesses.

This is the eighth such investment by the agri-food equity fund since it originated in 1994. Saskatchewan is diversifying and expanding its agri-food industry, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to helping diversification take place, dedicating \$20 million to the ag-food equity fund over five years shows our commitment.

Mr. Speaker, this new pelleting plant in Melville will directly benefit both grain and livestock producers, but it will also benefit the local economy. As a farmer, I'm glad to see such diversification projects like the one in Melville that will only add to our growing economy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Professorship in Petroleum Engineering

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday, I had the privilege of being on a tour of our Saskatchewan Research Council's lab facilities here in Regina at a time when a special agreement was being signed between the Research Council and the University of Regina, an agreement for a professorship in petroleum engineering.

Mr. Speaker, this is indeed important in a province where a number of our explorations and attempts to have oil is much more difficult than that in our neighbour to the west, in Alberta. The impressive displays of experimentation with various ways to extract oils from the ground, as well as to further the uses of emulsions to move heavy oil to be able to further the goals of horizontal drilling, and to be able to provide that expertise is now in a partnership agreement with the University of Regina. Dr. Amit Chakma is the dean of engineering there, who will be forming the partnership.

The labs, as well as the library, impressive library for the Research Council, will be available to the University of Regina students.

Indeed an advancement for our oil and petroleum industry and an advancement for the economy of the province of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Northern Economic Development

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has given the go-ahead to the McArthur River project, the

biggest uranium mine in the world. This is exciting as it will provide jobs and economic benefits to this province.

While the project is good news, it still does not address the more serious problems facing the North such as inadequate housing, a crumbling highway system, and the lack of a secondary approach to social and economic community development.

And these problems will not be solved unless the government looks beyond the one-industry mentality and develops a comprehensive plan for northern economic development as the provincial government's financial picture continues to improve because of this mine.

Max Morin, the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse, said in a *Star-Phoenix* article, quote:

It's catch-up money so we can catch up with the rest of the province in terms of infrastructure and employment.

Will the minister commit to a definite meeting date with northern leaders, stakeholders, and government representatives, to develop an economic development vision for northern Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this question is out of date. I've extended an invitation to the northern leaders to meet with myself and several of my cabinet and caucus colleagues in Saskatoon, I think on or about May 12 or May 13.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't want to be faced with dying and desperate communities as resources are being taken out. We must begin diversification now in northern Saskatchewan. And this province has that responsibility to people of the North — to create a diversified economic environment which will give people hope for the future instead of despair.

Recommendations made in the provincial-federal panel called for employment figures to increase 6 or 7 per cent from 50; as well as a commitment to ensure that 35 per cent of goods and services to a development be bought from northern contractors. These should just be guidelines, and this government should aim for more; although it has made no firm promise to follow through on these recommendations.

Will the minister or the Premier explain what is being done to ensure that these recommendations are addressed and enhanced?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I've already said the question is a couple of days late at least, if not a couple of years late. The invitation has gone out to the northern leaders to talk about all of these various issues which the hon. member raises

in his question.

I want to say to the hon. member that you would be of assist . . . of invaluable assist to the people of northern Saskatchewan if he would write letter to the Prime Minister of Canada urging him to nominate a nominee . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now just listen to me; to nominate a nominee to take part with us in this dialogue with northern leaders.

I've written to the Prime Minister asking him to do so. I think you being a Liberal and coming from the northern area, you should do the same thing on behalf of your caucus. Invite the federal government to represent . . . be represented there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If my writing a letter to the Prime Minister would help develop a long-term strategy for northern Saskatchewan, I most certainly will take that opportunity.

But this long-term strategy must include economic development at the community level, it must include job creation and employment, as well as meet the recommended targets by these panels.

Max Morin again, the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse, says and I quote: "If Saskatchewan has a 6 per cent unemployment rate, that's the unemployment rate that we want up here."

By up here, Mr. Speaker, he means northern Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the people of the North have every right to demand this.

Again I ask the Premier or the minister to commit to providing such initiatives; so that the people of northern Saskatchewan will have a chance and a better quality of life — initiatives that have definite dates for meetings and certainly action plan for northern Saskatchewan as well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may or may not be aware, I believe he is aware, that certainly in the history, the recent history, the last 20, 25 years of uranium mining in northern Saskatchewan particularly under the Blakeney administrations — and I want to say commitment also continues under the current administration — there has been a solid track record of involving Northerners, people living in the North, in employment opportunities and job opportunities, contracting out opportunities, the kinds of issues which he has raised.

In fact it was unprecedented anywhere in Canada in the mid 1970s when, under then former premier Blakeney, those rules stemming from the Bayda Commission, and also, if I may add, the Mitchell Commission who's now a colleague of the cabinet — current provincial cabinet — those recommendations were adopted.

Now we have to continue moving up — continually moving up.

We have to continue to expand the economic opportunities for people in the North, as we do for people all over Saskatchewan. That's what this dialogue with northern leaders is all about; that's why I'm asking them to attend; and that's why I'm urging the provincial Liberal caucus to join us by asking the Prime Minister to nominate an appropriate representative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Board

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the legislative committee on Public Accounts met this morning and some of us, members of the committee, were expecting to question workmen's compensation board officials about a number of concerns raised by the Provincial Auditor.

However, prior to any of the questions being asked by the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) officials, government members introduced a motion to seek legal opinions as to whether the board should be autonomous or even open to review by the Public Accounts Committee.

Will the minister in charge of workmen's compensation board tell this House if he believes the board should be accountable to the government and to the Legislative Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member will know, Mr. Speaker, that the Workers' Compensation Board is a quasi-judicial tribunal constituted by an Act of this Assembly. She will know that it operates independently of government without expending any public funds at all. Indeed on the contrary, the board makes a contribution to the programs of government by paying for the occupational health program and the Workers' Advocate program in the Department of Labour.

The Workers' Compensation Board has never in its history been asked to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. Recently it has voluntarily submitted to appear before the Crown Corporations Committee and it has agreed to continue that, and indeed dealt with the very points raised by the auditor during a meeting this year of the Crown Corporations Committee.

So the question it raises, as to the appropriateness of it being before the Public Accounts Committee, is a good question, a legal question. If the legal opinion is that it is required to do so, it is more than happy to do so. But until then, of course, we should await those legal opinions before making up our minds whether or not they have to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the Workers' Compensation Board includes three members who are appointed by order in council and report to cabinet. Workers' Compensation Board is a government body and the Workers' Compensation Board is government regulated. Workers' Compensation Board officials appeared before the Crown Corporations Committee in January

and the Workers' Compensation Board is even referred to in the government's summary financial statements.

Will the minister explain why then the Workers' Compensation Board shouldn't be accountable to this government?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think, Mr. Speaker, that if the member wishes to be fair about these questions, if she wishes to be fair about these questions, she will agree that the Workers' Compensation Board already accounts to this Assembly. It does so through the filing of an annual report. It does so by, and for years has done so, through the Minister of Labour during consideration of the estimates of the Department of Labour. I can recall many, many years in which the subject of the Workers' Compensation Board has been included in the questions asked by the opposition during the consideration of the Department of Labour's estimates. So it continues to do that.

It also voluntarily appears before the Crown Corporations Committee when any question at all could be asked, and indeed many have been asked. I don't see why it would be important to this member that the board appear not before one committee but two. I don't understand what would be the purpose of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, in 1993 this government made changes to The Workers' Compensation Act establishing that the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is in essence the cabinet, may make regulations setting out guidelines for the decisions . . . making decisions by the board. So clearly, Mr. Speaker, government does oversee the Workers' Compensation Board. That's the end of the story.

The people of this province who are injured on the job deserve and demand accountability. After all, if the Workers' Compensation Board is not accountable to government, where are the workers supposed to go for assistance? Is this just one more step this NDP government is taking to distance itself from any responsibility and any accountability for anything?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the member is going to ask those written questions no matter what kind of an answer I give. That's obvious.

The fact of the matter is that the board is accounting, to use . . . to the people of this province, as the member used that very term, in a way in which it never has before, by appearing before the Crown Corporations Committee — a committee of this legislature, a very distinguished committee — and by submitting itself to any questions that any member of that committee has to ask of it.

Now if that isn't accounting, I'd like to know what is. And if one committee is not enough, is two enough? Should we think of three or four or five? Really, we have to be practical about these things. Every member of this House is busy. We don't need to go duplicating things from committee to committee.

Surely it's enough to appear before one.

But let me say, Mr. Speaker, the board is prepared to observe whatever its legal obligations are, and if the legal advice that is received by the committee is to the effect that it has to appear before the Public Accounts Committee, it is more than happy to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

No-fault Insurance

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

Mr. Minister, the Government of Manitoba recently initiated a public review of their no-fault insurance program. This review was a commitment made by the Filmon government when they first introduced the no-fault insurance program. They are following through on that commitment now.

Mr. Minister, the Manitoba government is willing to admit that their no-fault insurance program isn't perfect and they are seeking public input on how the system could be improved. Mr. Minister, will you initiate a public review of the no-fault insurance program here in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to respond to the member from Kindersley by indicating to him that we implemented in Saskatchewan a no-fault insurance program in 1995 after extensive review and study of the type of program that we wanted to see in Saskatchewan.

I think what the member needs to recognize is that in Manitoba the no-fault insurance program there was introduced a year in advance of us. We have always said in Saskatchewan that in the preparation for looking at the future of what the no-fault program might be here, we would be examining that through a window of approximately five years. With the implementation of the program beginning in 1995, it's always been our commitment that we would have a formal review of the program some time within that period.

At this point in time, there are a number of things that are occurring throughout the province. Just recently, we completed the final stages of getting the tertiary care services in place. Some of our secondary care services or support services at the regional centres are just being established. When that program has a bit of time behind them, rest assured that that program will be evaluated on those bases, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, five years is a long time to wait for many residents in the province of Saskatchewan. Carol and Jan Markwart's case is well-known. They lost a daughter, sir, their well-being, and much, much more.

Mr. Minister, it is only in extreme cases that criminal charges

are ever laid against a driver. Usually that driver is drunk, or driving in a way that is dangerous to the public. And charges are laid only in about 5 per cent of all traffic accidents.

Charges were laid in this case against the driver that hit the Markwarts yet your government took away their right to sue and their right to dignity. Mr. Minister, your no-fault system has failed the Markwarts, as it has failed many other Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Minister, will you review . . . begin a review today, rather than waiting five years from now, review your no-fault system and give back the right to sue to the 5 per cent of victims where criminal charges were laid against the other drivers? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to respond to the member from Moosomin by indicating clearly to the member, as I've already outlined in my previous statement, that the review of the no-fault program will happen in a formal way sometime in the period that we have identified. But to also advise the member from Moosomin that we continue to monitor the progress of the no-fault insurance program in Saskatchewan on an individual basis.

It's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that any time that a family or an individual is involved in a car crash, there is a great deal of trauma and certainly a great deal of crisis that families experience. And we appreciate that and understand that. In the process of working through the no-fault program, what we have, Mr. Speaker . . . is initiated a number of support services across the province to help individuals and families through that process.

And I say to the member opposite that in Saskatchewan, we treat people who are involved in drinking and driving offences in a very, very serious fashion. And the results around, certainly the Markwart case, are difficult and we've met with them on a number of occasions. But the individual who was involved in the accident, the ambulance driver, is currently being dealt, as we read, by the court system. And in Saskatchewan, drinking drivers are dealt with in a very harsh manner, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, if you think no-fault insurance is working so well, then you obviously haven't been listening to some of the people whose lives have been devastated.

Brenda Kienas of Grenfell was seriously injured in an accident last year and she can't afford to wait for five years. At the time she was just finishing her education to become a nurse's aide. She already had a job lined up after she completed her training. But as a result of her injuries, she was unable to take that job.

Mr. Minister, she is not being compensated for her loss of income from that job. She's only receiving a small loss of studies benefit. Mr. Minister, students who are injured receive only a small benefit with no compensation for a lifetime of lost earnings. Is that fair? Isn't it something that should be looked at as part of a public review of no-fault insurance?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But I want to assure the member that in the implementation of the no-fault program in Saskatchewan, when he makes comparisons, and he calls for the old tort system to come back into its origin again . . . And I want to just say to the member that there are some people who hold that view, but there are many others who do not hold that view.

And just recently I met with a group of individuals from Prince Albert, and some of them are here today. And the individual who was the spokesman for that group, Mr. Member, indicates here that he said that the group is not necessarily looking for a return to the tort system, is his quote, where legal claims were launched against the drivers with no fault necessary.

And I say to the member that when you take a look at the personal injury protection program today and all of the benefits it provides over the tort system, they're extensive. And I can read some of those to you.

For example, Mr. Member, I want to say to you that students in particular, who receive a maximum of \$13,000 for each school year they miss, under the old program that was \$75 a week for a period of 52 weeks.

This is a significant increase in that particular area as referred to the student alone. The other benefits are related to that where we've provided for medical services which are well over \$500,000 as compared to 10, and the program isn't working fully but . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, Marilyn and Stan Fabish from Prince Albert had the unfortunate luck of being in a car accident on January 1, 1995, the first day your ill-conceived no-fault took effect. A couple of weeks after their accident your government hired people to follow the Fabishes and videotape them. We understand you have many families under surveillance right now.

Mr. Minister, why are you paying someone a good deal of money just days after an accident to see if you can get out of compensating them. It's not like this was a year after the accident and you questioned the injuries and pain. You are probably paying SGI secret police more money than it would cost you to be fair to these families in the first place. The Fabishes are now on social assistance, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, if your no-fault system is fair, why are people who were employed forced to rely on social service assistance? Why is that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I want to respond to the member from Rosthern by indicating to him, first that I'm not in the position to share with the member all of the details as they relate to the particular cases that we work with. But if the member wishes to pursue that through, in this case the Fabishes, certainly he is free to do that, and they can provide him with the kind of detail on which we've provided them on this particular case.

But I want to assure the member from Rosthern that the fact that we have surveillance officers today that are working within the corporation of SGI, doing examinations as to see whether or not people are in fact using the system in an inappropriate fashion, that's not new, Mr. Member. Those surveillance people have been there forever. And we haven't added any additional members to that. We don't employ any more surveillance officers than we did in the past. It continues to be the way in which we do business and ensure that people who are on the program have entitlements into a further period.

You asked me the question earlier about whether or not the program is working fully. Well of course there are things that we can do to improve the quality of the program. And we're doing that as time goes on. We'll always ensure that we can enhance that and make sure that the program can be as strong that we can make it for the residents of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Minister, indeed you are correct. Your no-fault insurance program isn't working very well. There are dozens of examples of people whose lives have been devastated as a result of your no-fault insurance program. A group of those people have banded together to form the victims for no-fault insurance support group. They are calling for your no-fault insurance plan to be amended to include a victims' bill of rights.

Mr. Minister, the victims of no-fault insurance have some very good ideas about what they want to see in that victims' bill of rights. These amendments could be developed through a public review of the no-fault system just like what is taking place in Manitoba.

Mr. Minister, will you admit that your no-fault insurance program isn't working well? Will you initiate a review of the no-fault insurance system and commit to developing a victims' bill of rights?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I want to first of all indicate to the member, as I already did his colleague, that I had an opportunity to meet with the coalition in Prince Albert. And when I met with the coalition from Prince Albert, I quoted a couple of minutes ago what the Chair of that particular committee indicated. And what he said is that he wasn't necessarily concerned about the change in the no-fault system back to the tort.

Where the major concern was, Mr. Member, is the fact around the rehabilitation services. Currently we put in, in the neighbourhood of \$25 million into rehabilitation for people who are injured with soft tissue in this province. That is more than anywhere else in the country.

We have a working relationship today with the World Health Organization to ensure that we can monitor the progress of this program into the future. Furthermore we had a university study that's being undertaken as we speak today, that will report in

about 10 months, that will identify for us the kinds of progress that individuals who are involved in car crashes are subject to. And we'll report that.

And later this day we're going to be involved with Mr. Rick Hansen in terms of ensuring that into the future we'll be able to provide additional revenue for them as it relates to soft-tissue injuries across this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agricultural Credit Corporation Bills

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of farmers have contacted my office after receiving letters from the Agriculture Corporation of Saskatchewan and what ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) is doing is requesting that they make good payment on their outstanding crop insurance balance.

In essence the NDP government, which is, of course, in the process of winding down ACS, is now trying to collect from farmers who received GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) bills under the GRIP wind-up program. Will the Minister of Agriculture tell us today how many farmers have received letters from Ag Credit and how much money has AC been assigned to collect.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, ACS is doing some of the collections in that area. The process is the same; if there's an outstanding bill for crop insurance, whether it be from GRIP or from Crop Insurance, it's handled in exactly the same manner as it has always been handled because Crop Insurance does the administration.

And this is a process of just being responsible to taxpayers by collecting money that's due and owing to the province of Saskatchewan. And I don't know. If the member's suggesting, if the member's suggesting that we shouldn't do that, then I would ask him what he would suggest we do for outstanding bills.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course the problem started back when this government broke a contract back in the early '90s and introduced retroactive legislation which of course is before the courts at this very time.

It was compounded by a promise in this House by the former Agriculture minister, Darrel Cunningham, who said that farmers would not have to repay any bills and of course they could have done that by paying out the \$188 million that this government stole from farmers, and the farmers that got payments could have gotten more.

Can the minister tell us today whether he's trying to collect this money before the court settlement appears. So that after that time, if the court goes against them, they won't be able to.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite

can dramatize all he wants by accusing the government of stealing.

Does the local co-op steal from farmers when they collect their bills from farmers? Is that what he is insinuating? Does the local fertilizer dealer steal from farmers when he collects his bills? I don't think so. This is a process we've gone through.

But you talk about stealing, you talk about stealing, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you who the thief is around here — \$320 million a year the federal Liberal government cuts out of this province. Every year. Every year. \$250 million dollars a year in the safety net funding — cut.

Talk about the cost recovery for inspection and grading fees. Cost recover for pesticide registration. Cuts to PAWBED (Partnership Agreement on Water Based Economic Development); cutting PAWBED and PARD (Partnership Agreement on Rural Development), Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what — if you add up all the dollars, if you add up all the dollars that Jean Chrétien and Ralph Goodale have taken from this province, from the pockets of the farmers of this province, it would be in the area by the year 2000 of well over a billion dollars. Now that's thievery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 63 — The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 63, The Meewasin Valley Authority 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.

Bill No. 64 — The Wascana Centre Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 64, The Wascana Centre Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read for 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. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, to request . . . or to advise that after consultation with the opposition party and the third party, that we have come to an agreement that this afternoon we should proceed directly to Bill 221 followed by Bill 228, and then go to government business.

So I respectfully now request leave that we proceed to private members' second readings, Bill 221 . . . pardon me, 211. I

correct that to Bill 211.

The Speaker: — I will ask the hon. member again. There doesn't seem to be crystal clarity here as to what leave is being requested — order — and in order for the House to provide leave, it has to clearly know what leave is being requested. And I will recognize on that point the Government Whip.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I thank you for the leave, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that before we go to leave on that, we should be going through the private Bills, which I neglected to mention. So I would request that the leave take place after we finish the private Bills under Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: — Requesting then leave to go to Bills 211 and 228 at that time?

Mr. Kowalsky: — That's right.

The Speaker: — Okay, the question for which the Government Whip requests leave is that following consideration of private Bills, Committee of the Whole, that the House will then proceed directly to second readings, private members' Bills No. 211 and 228. Leave is required. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE BILLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might through you request leave of the members of the Assembly to make two introductions.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, and members of the Legislative Assembly, it's my great honour to introduce to the members of the House a very special guest in our legislature today who has just arrived. And of course I'm referring to Mr. Rick Hansen, whose "Man in Motion World Tour" touched our hearts and our spirits 10 years ago.

It's nice to see Rick here with his group. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, Rick Hansen wheeled almost 25,000 miles through 34 countries to raise awareness about spinal cord injuries, demonstrating courage, determination, and vision. He also raised \$20 million, creating a legacy which funds spinal cord research, rehabilitation, wheelchair sports, awareness, and education.

You'd think in one lifetime, 25,000 miles in 34 countries and \$20 million plus would be enough. Yet Rick Hansen's commitment and selfless dedication seem to know no bounds. May 22 marks the 10th anniversary of the "Man in Motion World Tour," and throughout those 10 years, our special guest has worked continuously to better the lives of survivors of spinal cord and brain injuries.

He is currently promoting the Rick Hansen neurotrauma fund, an initiative which will support research, rehabilitation, and prevention of these catastrophic injuries. And I've had the pleasure of talking to him about this.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the House, it was Helen Keller who once said the following, quote, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."

Rick Hansen, we are truly honoured and inspired by your accomplishments. You have shown us that any problem can be overcome by courage, determination, and dedication to a higher ideal.

Mr. Chairman, I know everyone in this House will join me today in welcoming truly, truly a great, outstanding Canadian citizen of the world, Mr. Rick Hansen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I should be introducing others, but I have one additional introduction, Mr. Chair, if I may, while I'm on my feet; to introduce to you and to the House another guest. Patricia Harrison is the executive director of the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Paraplegic Association.

Ms. Harrison also chairs the provincial Neurotrauma Initiative Steering Committee, which has been actively promoting research, rehabilitation, and prevention of spinal cord injuries here in the province of Saskatchewan. She's joining Rick Hansen and will be present with us in an announcement in a short few minutes outside of the Chamber.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I'd like all members of the House to join me today in welcoming Patricia Harrison as well to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Is the . . .

Mr. Krawetz: — With leave, to introduce guests as well.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The official opposition would like to join with the Premier and applaud Rick Hansen's commitment to raise the level of public and government awareness about the increasing number of brain and spinal cord injuries which occur every year because of automobile accidents.

Over the last 10 years Rick has made a major contribution to

Canadian society through his efforts. And I can say with great conviction that it is people like Rick, with such caring hearts and strong determination, that make Canada such a great place to live.

Rick wants everyone to realize that there is a definite connection between brain and spinal injuries and automobile accidents. This is a very serious problem which not only causes a great deal of pain but costs a great deal of money. Every year 37,000 new brain and spinal injuries occur in Canada because of car accidents. Each year these injuries cost the nation \$37 billion.

Fortunately for people who suffer from such injuries, Rick has set his goal high. He will be asking all of the provincial governments to dedicate a percentage of traffic fines into a fund to support prevention, rehabilitation, and research for spinal cord injuries. He has already gone a long way to reaching this goal and I'm very pleased to see that the Premier will be making an announcement very soon.

On behalf of the official opposition, welcome to Saskatchewan and thank you very much for all you've done for Canadians.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Is the member for Moosomin requesting leave to introduce questions?

Mr. Toth: — Leave to welcome guests, yes please.

The Chair: — Do I hear agreed?

Leave granted.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and extend another welcome. I had the privilege of, almost 10 years ago . . . Actually more than 10 years ago, and it was February. The snow was blowing and the former premier and I happened to be in a caucus meeting in Cypress and we flew in to Moosomin to meet Mr. Hansen, his "Man in Motion Tour." And the interesting thing, Mr. Chairman, is we flew by plane and we heard that Mr. Hansen was on the way by No. 1, just outside of Elkhorn. And we're figuring okay, they said he should arrive at the border at such and such a time, and "Man in Motion" with wheelchair, you kind of factor that out. Well he arrived from Elkhorn ahead of the premier and I, and we drove from Moosomin about the same distance; so it just showed the determination.

And I think certainly it was a real pleasure to meet Mr. Hansen and his entourage. And to just get to know an individual who didn't give up because of circumstances, but decided to look ahead and to elevate himself. And as a result there's many hundreds of thousands of people are going to be helped in the future, as a result of this.

And we want to say thank you to you, Mr. Hansen, and to everyone else involved in . . . to Patricia Harrison as well. It's certainly, I think, has elevated individuals who through no fault of their own have certain handicaps. It has basically said to the

rest of us in society, we're important individuals as well. And we thank you for that message you passed on to us. We certainly welcome you again to our province. And it's a pleasure meeting you and having the privilege of getting to know you. Best wishes in your future endeavours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE BILLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 301 — The Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District Act

Clauses 1 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1430)

Bill No. 302 — The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company Act, 1997

Clauses 1 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

PRIVATE BILLS

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 301 — The Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District Act

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 301, The Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District Act be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 302 — The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company Act, 1997

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Bill No. 302, The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company Act, 1997 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill 211 — The Gambling Addiction Accountability Act

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very happy and pleased to have the opportunity to debate this particular Bill in the House today.

At the present, I'd just like to start off by saying that the cost of providing many of the addiction services for gambling addiction are borne by the health districts, which are walking a very fine financial tightrope. And it only makes sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the department which benefits financially should also be accountable for the social costs associated with treating and rehabilitating the victims of its activity.

Basically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we're asking the government to do through this Bill is, finally, at long last, to take some responsibility for its actions.

For most of the last two years, I've sat in this House and have seen the members opposite time and time again act as if they should not be held responsible for anything that happens in this province. Whether it's municipal government, whether it's health care, whether it's youth crime, or whether it's education — this government simply refuses to accept the responsibility for its own actions. The members see no reason that they should be held accountable for the actions of their government.

Well the people of Saskatchewan disagree. I respectfully submit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan simply do not accept the government's constant excuses that nothing that's bad in this province is not their responsibility.

Sure, a corner store opens up in a small town anywhere and the Minister of Economic Development will stand here and take the credit. But anything negative is quickly sloughed off onto the nearest convenient scapegoat.

I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that leadership? Of course it isn't. Is that the type of government the people of Saskatchewan should expect or deserve? Of course it isn't.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill I have brought before the House simply asks the government to recognize that it has some responsibility when it comes to gambling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not going to take up the House time today debating the relative merits or harmful effects of gambling in our province. Quite frankly, that debate was settled when this government decided to open the floodgates to gambling four years ago.

VLTs (video lottery terminal) and casinos are now a reality in Saskatchewan. And until the people of the province tell us otherwise, gambling will remain a reality in Saskatchewan, as it is in most other provinces. And for obvious reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government certainly wants it to continue.

VLTs have proven to be a cash cow for this provincial treasury. And while we constantly hear the government cry and moan about the 1.5 per cent of their revenue they've lost through transfer reductions, one thing they don't publicize is the fact that this loss is more than offset by the money they collect through gambling.

That's revenue that was non-existent before 1993, and it's growing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last year this government netted \$100 million in VLT profits. This year the Minister of Finance is predicting \$127 million in profits. So obviously either more people are playing the VLTs in Saskatchewan or those who are playing them are spending more.

(1445)

Whatever the reason for this huge growth in gambling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government gleefully rakes in the money hand over fist. It's happy to take charge of the benefits of its gambling expansion policy. But when it comes to the other side of the coin, when it comes to the dark side of gambling, we don't hear a peep from that side of the House.

I don't think there's a reasonable person in this province who would suggest that the mega-increase in gambling in Saskatchewan in the last four years has not had a negative impact on a portion of our population.

I gambled and lost everything — a familiar refrain in this province; although this government appears oblivious to the cries for help from its residents. I'm talking about those who have become addicted to gambling because of VLTs, which many see as the most addictive of all gambling enterprises.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what direct impact VLTs have had on our citizens in Saskatchewan is not known. That's because the government opposite absolutely refuses to do any kind of a study to find out what the impact has been.

Here it sits, day after day, month after month, year after year, raking in huge, huge gambling profits, yet it refuses to do a social impact study on the issue.

And why would that be, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well I have some ideas why that I'd like to share with you: because those members know that if they were to do such a study they would have to own up to the negative impacts that gambling has had on some segments of our society.

It's shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's absolutely shameful. However, for now and until the government finally takes some responsibility for its actions and conducts both a social and economic impact study regarding the effect of gambling, we'll have the numbers provided to us from other groups.

The most comprehensive study I've seen on this matter so far, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that put out by the National Council on Welfare. That study tells us something very startling. That study tells us that there could be 20,000 or more problem gamblers here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's 20,000 people that could lose everything they have to their addiction. And it's the government's responsibility to ensure that they are properly treated; that there are programs and facilities available.

Currently the government funds through the health districts gambling addiction therapy of about \$1.5 million — \$1.5 million only. Considering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this

government takes in over \$125 million in VLTs, that to me sounds like a pitiful amount to treat addictions.

But we can argue that particular issue another day. My argument here today is centred on which department's budget the money to treat gambling addictions should come out of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not believe this money should come out of existing health budgets — they are stressed enough — not when we have hospitals and health centres closing, nurses laid off and large areas of our province now going without primary health care. It is incumbent upon the government to make sure the people who develop gambling addictions receive treatment — proper treatment.

However, let's have the department that receives the benefit of gambling pay for those costs. This will ensure that the costs of gambling addiction will come out of the Liquor and Gaming Authority's bottom line instead of the budget of the Department of Health — or more importantly, the budgets of health districts who, despite the Minister of Health's assertions, continue to close beds and close facilities.

And with this Bill, the true costs of treating those addicted to gambling will be seen in black and white instead of an indistinguishable expense of the health districts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan know how much money the government takes in through gambling. They should also have the right to see what that policy costs this province, it costs the taxpayers of this province. This Bill is simply one small step in that direction. It does not deal with several other issues that are of grave concern to us. It does not deal with the money that is leaving our communities by the truck load. At the same time this money is leaving our communities, they are also forced to deal with the devastating cut-backs thrust upon them by the Municipal Affairs minister.

We debated a Bill in this House last week that would have seen the government forced to live up to its promise to return 10 per cent to the communities. And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government opposite voted against that Bill. I fully expect the government will also vote against this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I hope that for once those members opposite will take some responsibility for their policies and vote in favour of this change.

It's a small change that would mean a great deal to all the citizens of Saskatchewan. You can't only enjoy the benefits of gambling, you also have to acknowledge its consequences. All the members opposite and this government has done now is reap the benefits and not give anything back.

And I would hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after voting in favour of this Bill, the members opposite will finally come to their senses and immediately implement a full-scale study regarding the impact of gambling on the people and the communities of this great province of ours.

If we are to have gambling in Saskatchewan we simply need to know how it has affected our province. To simply turn a blind

eye, as this government has, is the height of irresponsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm asking, I'm pleading with the government members today, for once to take some responsibility. The people of Saskatchewan elected you to be responsible, to be accountable. That's the challenge I throw out to you today. Are you willing to accept it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to move second reading of Bill 211, The Gambling Addiction Accountability Act. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I enter into the discussion today on this government's lack of accountability and their failure to acknowledge the responsibility for insufficient funding of gambling addictions in this province. There have been so many times I've stood in the House and listened to this government and been totally appalled by the decision not to take responsibility for anything that happens in the province. They hide behind school boards, they hide behind health boards, they hide behind municipal boards. For goodness' sakes, you even hide behind the Tories.

This government . . . the government members this morning even stooped so low as to wonder if they could use a jurisdictional challenge to make sure they didn't have to be responsible to employees and employers in the province through workmen's compensation — any excuse so they don't have to take responsibility for their action or their inactions. But I do digress.

The whole issue of gambling, and what's more, the money that is brought in from this pastime, is this government's unearned ticket to any perceived financial success in the province. It's a form of taxation that people don't object to because it's a type of sin tax. Wrapped in the pretty package with all the bells and whistles, gambling revenues have been the only form of taxation on the people of this province that haven't been complained about because it isn't compulsory.

Unlike every other method this government uses to gouge the last nickel out of the million of us die-hard Saskatchewanians who refuse to leave the province no matter how hard the government beats us, gambling is a personal choice. I choose not to partake in it so they won't get rich from me.

But, hon. members, gambling is not unlike an addiction to some other habits like smoking and alcohol. It's not a habit people are proud to have, and it's not a habit that's easy to kick.

But, Mr. Speaker, unlike smoking and alcohol addictions, gambling does not cause apparent health problems. Gamblers don't have an increased chance of lung cancer or liver problems or heart attacks.

Our medical system does not refuse medical coverage to anyone because their health problem is a result of an addiction. That's just not the Saskatchewan way, and it's not the Canadian way of dealing with our citizens. And for that I'm very proud.

We don't question why people need health care. It's recognized as a responsibility of society. But in this province the

responsibility of health care has failed to take the next logical step, and that is to cover mental health care to the same extent.

I realize it is not just mental health care required to deal with gambling addictions that this government is failing to address. There is a long way to go if our society is to see all the mental health problems as major problems. Maybe we are all too practical or simplistic or naïve to realize that just because someone isn't bleeding all over the floor, it doesn't mean there isn't a huge health problem involved.

Mr. Speaker, in this province the government is raking in hundreds of millions of dollars from a tax on citizens who have a type of health problem. The pittance of money that is thrown at these people with this particular health problem is first of all, an insult when you consider that less than one and a half per cent of the money they contribute to the government coffers actually goes back to help solve their particular problem. The rest of it is earmarked for the government's own gambling problem.

The real insult is the fact that the money comes in the Health department's budget, not the Liquor and Gaming department. How much of the money in each health district is actually used for the treatment of gaming addictions, and where is that accountability? And where, for Heaven's sake, is the logic in using health dollars when it should be gambling dollars? And a lot more of them, I may suggest.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — I can hear the members opposite defending this action by saying all the money goes into one account. The money goes into the General Revenue Fund and it's dispersed from there . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I think they should give their head a shake.

The addicted gamblers in this province have to rely on the few members opposite to decide during the budget process how important their problem is, and how much money should be spent to alleviate the problem, if in the first place the government wants to alleviate the problem.

There is nothing tying the amount of money taken in with the amount of money that's going out to help people with this health problem. And, Mr. Speaker, just as importantly, there's been no effort put forward by this government to undertake any type of study of the effect increased gambling has on our society from a social or an economical aspect. And my question is why? Any government, especially a social government who supposedly stands up for the social issues of this province, the great white knights and the defender of people's rights and freedoms — the actions are better put, their lack of actions — to address the social issues caused by the government's own gambling addiction has added to the problems of gambling in this province.

And this government is again not willing to take responsibility for their actions. They are again willing to take from citizens and not give the service or provide for a need that is growing because of a government policy.

The hon. member from Melville has repeatedly asked this government to act like a man and recognize their responsibility. And it hasn't done any good. So maybe, just maybe, I should challenge them to act like women and actually do something about the problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — This government loves to rule by regulations. So I'd like to suggest that if they can't support our member's Bill, they should just write up another one of the little regulations and make it mandatory that the Liquor and Gaming fund contribute directly to each health board, and set a percentage of the revenues they gouge from the people who pay gambling tax to the province and to the district health boards. I won't even suggest the percentage. It probably won't be enough and it'll be just one more thing we have to fix when we become government in 1999.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a distinct pleasure to enter into this debate today, to correct the many inaccuracies represented by the members opposite.

I have to say, just before I get started, I am amazed at how inept, incompetent, and inaccurate that opposition can be. We have gone through this debate now for two different legislatures. Now I know that members opposite wouldn't recognize that, because the only continuity they had they booted out of their caucus and is now sitting as an independent. But let me tell you, let me just tell you a little bit about where we came from.

There was a time not that many years ago when this Assembly was debating these very issues. And the member for Greystone, who was Liberal leader number one at that point — and I just will refer to them by number because the member for Melville is the Liberal leader number two. I think we are on Liberal leader number four or five by now — but let me tell you this. That member would stand up and not raise a concern that gambling was an evil.

This is a new position for the Liberal Party. This is a new position. And I would argue it's an intellectually dishonest position because all they say is, we would do it differently. That's all they say, is that we would just do it a little differently.

Well let me tell you this, Mr. Speaker. Before they do it differently they should understand what we are doing. We are the first government in 25 years of regulated gambling in this province to recognize that it causes addiction and to put the money in place to support those people. The first government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, when the Thatcher government introduced gambling into this province, they didn't put a penny in. Not a cent. When the Tories were in office and radically

expanded gambling to allow 16-year-olds into the bingo parlours, not a penny was put in to support addictions. This New Democratic government recognizes its responsibilities and has anted up the money to make sure the people's health and well-being is protected.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate when the members opposite stand up and play politics with illnesses. Because let's be honest. That's what this is. Granted it affects a very small number of people. Pathological addiction to gambling is a very, very small affliction in our population.

It would make sense that we would treat addictive personality behaviours like this, that are a result of gambling, like alcohol, in the same way. Why would we not treat it as a health affliction? Why would we not fund it through the health system? Why would we not provide for these people to get treatment through the normal mechanisms? That's a simple question.

When we went through this debate a few year ago, the rationale was, is that this is an illness and should be treated as such. I want to make sure the members opposite understand this. Because I look at the member from North Battleford sitting in the back row giggling. Obviously he's just playing politics with this. Obviously just playing politics; there's no real concern here.

We undertook a prevalency study to find out what the nature of addiction was in this province before we went into this. And what it said was, less than a tenth of a per cent of people became pathologically addicted to gambling. Unbelievable small amount. But nevertheless, our response as a government was to provide more money per capita, more money per capita than any other jurisdiction in Canada. And that is something we should all recognize; it's something we should all recognize.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's also important that we take into account what this member opposite is recommending. He says that we should separately account for this. I say to you, why would we do that? Why we would not continue to provide all of the funds that we gain from alcohol, from gaming, from other sources, so that they can be dedicated to health and education and social programs. So they can make sure that families are supported. So they can provide for better social well-being in this province.

Though I can understand why the Liberals would oppose that, because the Liberals' platform has always been to cut funding to health care, to cut funding to education, to cut funding to social programs. And that's what that member opposite supports.

It's interesting that he complains about the \$125 million that comes from Saskatchewan people. He says it's a huge amount, but he says that the 250 million that the federal Liberals have cut from social programs is nothing, absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for some time on this today, but I

figure what we should do is simply defeat this Bill and move along. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the member requesting to close debate?

Mr. Osika: — Yes I am, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Then it is my duty to inform members of the House that the mover is about to close debate and if anyone wishes to speak, they will have to do it now.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just heard a member opposite, the member from Regina South, that exemplifies — exemplifies — the utter arrogance and disdain that this government has for the people of Saskatchewan. One of their own cabinet ministers rallied against gambling expansion in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that member has the gall to get up and accuse the Liberals of playing politics with this very serious situation.

Close to 20,000 people could be addicted to gambling in this province. We are asking that they support us in identifying the money that's being raked in from rural Saskatchewan and devote it and dedicate it to help those people that these gambling policies of this government have contributed to. That's what we're asking, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ten per cent of the VLTs that were to be returned by this government was a promise that they refused to adhere to. That shows the utter arrogance and disdain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government opposite has for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion negatived on division.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to address this particular Bill, the big game damage compensation fee Act, as it's a very important issue across Saskatchewan, but particularly in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because that is where the damage is being felt, that is where the farmers are losing.

But it's across Saskatchewan that individual hunters are paying for this particular program that the government implemented last year as a stopgap measure to take some pressure off of themselves to compensate farmers for the losses they were suffering through deer depredations mainly.

Mr. Speaker, the government imposed a fee of \$11 per hunting tag on all hunters, when they bought their wildlife habitat certificate, to pay for this damage. It was only hunters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that had to pay this fee.

Everyone in society has an opportunity to enjoy our wildlife resources. We all have an opportunity to go out walking in the spring and summer to look at the deer, to see the fawns; in the fall to look at the big bucks. But only hunters were making direct monetary contributions to pay for any of the damages that the Queen's cows — the white-tailed deer of this province — were causing to farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, hunters were making the direct financial contributions. But farmers were paying an even greater cost, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they were suffering the losses. They did have an opportunity to try and access this fund that the government had just put in place, but to start off with, they had to prove they had damages, they had to pay a \$500 deductible, and then they were compensated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a rate of 70 per cent of crop insurance rates. Even after paying the deductible, Mr. Speaker, they could not recover the full cost of their damages.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was only two groups in society that were paying for the damage caused by the Crown's animals, the Queen's cows — hunters and farmers, Mr. Speaker.

And I believe that is totally wrong, and that's why we have introduced this particular Bill. We believe that society as a whole should be paying for the costs of this damage, Mr. Speaker, not the farmers as individuals, and not hunters as individuals; that the compensation should be coming from the government general revenues; that all members of society should be paying for this.

What happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the government implemented their \$11 fee to collect the funds to provide for this compensation program?

Well, Mr. Speaker, what we saw was a net reduction in the number of people hunting. It dropped by approximately 11,000 hunters. So at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the government lost money. While they charged \$11 more for hunting licences, because there were so many less hunters, they ended up at the end of the day with less money in their coffers than they had to start off with.

But what they did do though, Mr. Speaker, is they had started up another dedicated fund. Now I happen to believe that there is some value in dedicated funds. I'd like to see that same kind of dedication made to our fuel taxes and highways.

But the government opposite keeps saying no, we cannot have dedicated taxation. But in wildlife, under the big game compensation fees, we have dedicated taxation, Mr. Speaker. So it's only dedicated taxation when the government members want there to be dedicated taxation, not when the general public believes it's in their interest.

In fact we have seen another example lately of another dedicated taxation. That's the reconstruction fees within SaskPower, Mr. Speaker. So when the government believes that there is some value in those areas, they grab on to them. But when the public believes that there is some value, the government totally rejects them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the government . . . the people have totally rejected this \$11 fee. Some of them paid it last fall. Not all, because some of the collection agencies were unaware that they were to charge the \$11 fee. Some hunters had picked up their licences before the fee was implemented, so not everyone . . . So I suggest figures of how much the government lost, which was 30-some thousand dollars, that's assuming everyone paid the \$11 fee, which did not happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The government has not yet provided us with the actual amount of monies they have collected, but at the end of the day, they have lost even more than we initially suspected.

Mr. Speaker, there are some alternatives though, to what could be done. And we need to look at some of the alternatives, because it's just not the costs to hunters, Mr. Speaker, not just the cost to farmers that we're talking about, but it's also the cost to SGI.

SGI suffers more than 10,000 vehicular accidents with wildlife every year, at an average cost of about \$1,800 per accident, Mr. Speaker, \$1,800 for over 10,000 accidents. And of those 10,000 accidents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over 2,000 of them make no damage claims because the damage has not exceeded the deductible of \$500. So the individual owner, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has to pay the first \$500 worth of that damage. And then over and above that, SGI still averages \$1,800 a claim.

So we are certainly suffering a significant amount of property damage to vehicular traffic. We are suffering a great deal of damage — 2 to \$3 million per year to agricultural lands — and those . . . that's the damage the government admits to. There is significantly more damage than that out there that farmers simply aren't claiming for because they realize that to go to the government to seek compensation is a futile effort; that the government will simply ignore them.

And they have got tired of going to government to try and get them to recognize that the damage occurs, because they have been rejected year after year since this government has been in power. Most farmers have simply given up until they suffer severe economic losses and they try to recover some of that. And even then, they get only minimal response from the government, Mr. Speaker.

(1515)

But there are other areas that could be looked at, Mr. Speaker. One of the alternatives that we need to look at is, rather than decreasing hunting, as the \$11 fee has done, or decreasing hunting as the Liberals' Bill C-68 has done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to look at some means to increase hunting so that that lessens the pressure on agricultural lands; it lessens the pressure on the animals themselves by providing them with an expanded base on which to forage.

Because that's why they're on the roads, Mr. Speaker. It's because they're out there foraging because they can't access forage in the areas around them, because of the pressures from other animals. So they go out on the road and they strike . . . they are struck by a vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, one of the alternatives that could be looked at and should be looked at has been related to me in a letter sent by the Antler River Outfitters from my own constituency. They believe that we need to bring more hunters into the area. They believe that we need to provide monetary compensation to the landowners for the animals on their land that would encourage them to participate in a program to enhance that resource while still harvesting a greater number of them, Mr. Speaker.

They have sent a letter to the minister — and I'm hoping the minister will respond today — but they have sent a letter to the minister requesting that and proposing a pilot project for their area that would increase the hunting. It would bring in more money for the government. It would bring in more taxes for the government by having visitors come in from outside, paying for accommodations, gasoline, all the other items that hunters do buy as they travel through the area, Mr. Speaker. All of these things would aid in providing compensation to the landowners, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so we encourage the minister to take a very serious look at this.

Mr. Speaker, we believe the government is wrong with the \$11 compensation fee. It needs to be withdrawn immediately. The government will actually net out more money by doing so. There'll be a greater harvest of the resource, which in turn will mean less damage, both on agricultural land and to vehicles.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Bill that I have presented will address all of those concerns. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I would move Bill No. 228, The Saskatchewan Big Game Damage Compensation Fee Act be read a second time.

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It surprises me a bit that the member from Cannington didn't withdraw the Bill after talking to farmers and talking to hunters and finding out what they really think about the compensation program that this government had the courage to put into place.

He did say in his remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, something that I agree with him, and I have to admit to that, and that was the federal Liberal government's Bill C-68, the ill-conceived gun control Bill which will have more effect on hunting than anything else that we've seen in this province, that's for sure. So you know it would have been nice if the federal government would have put that money, whatever the cost of that program is, into a compensation program, but of course that did not happen.

He did make a comment about dedicated taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to clarify a few things on that. He should be aware by now that the compensation program, the wildlife compensation program in Saskatchewan, is funded by the hunters certainly, but the provincial government is also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, putting up \$2 million in funds to get the program going. And we're happy to say that the federal government has finally said that they are going to contribute an equal amount to the program as well. So you see it is not strictly a user-funded program, but certainly the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan are contributing as well.

I would like to speak against the Bill and I would ask at the end of my few statements that the members vote against the Bill that was brought to the Assembly by the member from Cannington.

The \$11 fee on hunting licences, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that farmers are very grateful for this year. Because as you know, a lot of the crops had to stay out in the fields. We had a real terrible fall, lots of snow, lots of rain. And of course farmers were not able to get their crops off and a lot of it had to stay till this spring. And a lot of those crops were damaged by wildlife, deer and elk, and in my area, elk especially. And so farmers were very pleased that there was a compensation program available to them for this purpose.

Hunters were also pleased in my area, on the most part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they could participate and continually access to big game hunting in farmers' fields. Farmers were very disappointed that there was very little in the way of compensation. With this program now they believe that the hunters are participating as a full partner in preventing damage to their crops, in taking the adequate amount of game, and thus are participating as a full partner.

I had mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the provincial government did put \$2 million up front to fund the provincial program, and there are \$600,000 approximately coming in from users in hunting fees. My understanding is that, as I mentioned earlier, the federal government also will contribute \$2 million to the program. This will sustain it for many years to come.

The department expects that about \$1.5 million will be applied for this year. There have been several claims to this point in time and there's likely more coming.

Alberta has a limited program, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba has recently enhanced its program, and I want to tell the member opposite that hunting fees in Saskatchewan, Alberta, are virtually the same.

It's not to say that this program is absolutely perfect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly as we go along we're going to want to make improvements to it. And I know that we've had some concerns stated to us in regards to the deductible of \$500 on damage to haystack, and certainly something that our government will want to look at in the future.

To date there have been approximately 1,800 compensation claims; 275 of the 1,800 claims are damages to haystacks. Government projects that big game damage compensation expenditures, as I mentioned earlier, will be about \$1.5 million.

The members on this side of the House believe that we have a good program, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We don't need another Tory type of program. We need a program that is efficient and does the job. It's a program that basically has one real good aspect to it, and that's the spot-loss coverage.

It encourages farmers to take preventative action as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's protection for the farmers with the

fall that we had, and a fall like that could come again. As you know, when NDP governments are in power we get the adequate rains that we need for our crops, and so certainly we need to protect our farmers.

We need to protect the hunters too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that hunters have access to farmers' land. With the winters that we've had, wildlife needed food. They were able to eat the farmers' crops though the farmer tried to protect them as best they could. But at least in the end they were compensated for their loss.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask that this House defeat the Bill that the member from Cannington has brought forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I must inform the Assembly that the mover is about to close debate on this motion and if anyone is wishing to speak they will do it now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to rise again on this particular debate because I believe that the member from Carrot River's remarks need some response.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know which farmers and which hunters the member has been talking to, if he's been talking to very many of them. But I have been to a great many wildlife suppers and meetings across this province in the last year, 20 or 30 of them. And, Mr. Speaker, I cannot repeat in this House the comments they have made to me about the \$11 fee. If I were to repeat those comments, I would be thrown out of this House and fined \$200.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to give this government \$200 for doing nothing, which is exactly what they're asking hunters to do for the \$11 fee. The government is taking the \$11 fee and doing nothing that needs to be done to compensate farmers.

The farmers are, Mr. Speaker — I want to find a word that expresses their reactions to it — I would like to be able to say appreciative, but they're not appreciative. They accept the meagre pittance that this government hands out in compensation, Mr. Speaker, because they recognize that that is all that agriculture gets from this government, is a pittance. That is all, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Most farmers, as I mentioned earlier, simply turn up their nose to this government when it comes to the pittances that they offer because they recognize that it is of very little value — very little value. Because when they do provide a compensation they also charge them a \$500 deductible and then charge them . . . provide only 70 per cent. So it becomes a very meagre coverage.

The member opposite mentioned Manitoba. At least in Manitoba they pay 75 per cent with no deductible. Mr. Speaker, at least they're providing some compensation, where this

particular government provides very little.

Hunters, for their \$11, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm sure you recognize this, get about three weeks worth of rifle hunting for that \$11 compensation plus all the other costs, Mr. Speaker. The rest of society gets 52 weeks of the year in which they benefit from that resource and they pay very, very little.

The member mentioned that Agriculture put \$2 million into the compensation program. Well that's \$2 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should have gone to agriculture and to farmers, not for wildlife compensation — not for wildlife compensation. The \$2 million should have remained in farm programs, Mr. Speaker, and SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) should have come up with the money to compensate for wildlife. That's where it should have come from, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government is the only entity in this province that benefits from the sale of wildlife licences. Now there are those who hunt without paying for those, but the government is the only one who monetarily benefits. They are the ones who should be paying the entire cost; not the farmers and not the hunters, Mr. Speaker.

So I would encourage everyone in this Assembly to support this Bill as being in the best interest of both wildlife and hunters.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order.

Motion negated on division.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I now request leave that we proceed toward government business, second readings, item 4, Bill 58, The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act.

Leave granted.

(1530)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58 — The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1997. And the Bill that we are . . . the Act that we are amending today, Mr. Speaker, is The Saskatchewan Assistance Act, 1966, which is indicative that there has not been significant change to the social assistance program in the province of Saskatchewan since 1966. This is a major undertaking.

Mr. Speaker, it does give me a great deal of pride to be moving this Act. As you will know, this government is committed to investing in Saskatchewan people and their future. Since becoming government in 1991, we have focused our efforts in this area, but now that we have some more limited financial room we are also beginning to more and more target our

investments into the people of this province.

Over the last number of years we have reformed the health system so that it better meets the needs of communities and individuals. We've developed school-based services that meet the specific needs of communities. And we worked in partnership with communities to develop the action plan for children which supports Saskatchewan's youth, children, and family.

Mr. Speaker, members of government, members of the Department of Social Services, and myself as minister, have spent a great deal of time over the past year talking with individuals, meeting with groups, working on the development of a redesigned social assistance plan. And now I am pleased to be able to say that we are making today a significant step towards the implementation of a redesigned social assistance program for the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Act that is being introduced, that I'm seconding today, lays the groundwork, as I indicated earlier, for the first re-crafting of social assistance in Saskatchewan in 30 years. As you know, Mr. Speaker, both the throne and budget speeches outlined that the Department of Social Services will, within the course of the next year, be announcing the implementation plan for the redesigned social assistance programs. This redesigned plan will reduce child poverty and make work pay for families receiving social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, there are several aspects of the current social assistance system which can discourage people from working or pursuing independence. The redesigned system will eliminate those disincentives to work and while continuing to support the vulnerable, will assist families to become independent. This plan will provide a benefit to children of low income families and supports to assist low income families to remain in or to move into the workforce.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we all agree the changes to the social assistance program are necessary. The changes are happening now at the federal and provincial levels. And with the support of this and other provinces, the federal government has announced the first phase of the national child benefit that they have announced will come into effect by July 1998.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that our Premier has taken the initiative about a year ago now to put forward the concept of an innovative, redesigned social assistance plan that includes a child benefit. And I'm even more proud today to be able to say that these concepts now are beginning to evolve into reality.

We need to make these amendments to The Saskatchewan Assistance Act in order to implement the programs I've talked about. The amendment I have introduced will do just that.

Now all that we require for the national child benefit to be implemented in Saskatchewan is now the federal piece, the Canadian child tax credit, to be introduced. The federal government has said that the national child benefit will come into effect in July 1998.

We've been pushing and hoping for an earlier implementation date. However in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, because it's not appropriate that we should wait, in the meantime in this province we've introduced a package of initiatives that we believe will ensure a smooth transition to the national child benefit.

In this regard I'm pleased to be able to tell you today that effective May 1, low income families across this province are now able to benefit from the enhancements to our Family Income Plan.

The Family Income Plan provides a monthly income supplement for low income families with dependent children, to help with the costs of food, shelter, and other necessities. Mr. Speaker, in this budget — in this budget, Mr. Speaker — we've targeted an additional \$3.8 million to children and families through the Family Income Plan. What this will mean, Mr. Speaker, is that the monthly benefit per child will rise from \$105 to \$120.

In addition, we have raised the level at which benefits begin to be reduced; so that more families across our province will be able to qualify for the program. And very importantly, Mr. Speaker, we have expanded supplementary health benefits for children under this program to include full supplementary health coverage, comprising drug, dental, and optometric services.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as a result of some of these changes and the amendments being made today to the social assistance Act, we have now positioned ourselves as a province so that we are ready to proceed with the national child benefit as soon as the federal government is ready and able to implement it. And in the meantime we are enhancing our existing programs to ensure a smooth transition into the national child benefit when it is introduced.

Mr. Speaker, this Act will also bring about some other important and much called for changes for individuals and communities across the province. As part of our commitment to communities, Mr. Speaker, the amendments to this Act will remove the levy which requires municipalities to contribute annually to social assistance costs.

That levy was put in place in 1966. Since that time provincial governments have ensured local governments use the property tax base to contribute to the cost of social assistance. Municipalities over the years have expressed concern about this and have urged the province to remove this levy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that I'm able to introduce this amendment today because it will simplify the financial arrangements between the province and municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this Act also introduces some housekeeping amendments. These amendments include removing outdated references to the Canada Assistance Plan now that the federal government has terminated cost-sharing arrangements through it, and eliminates references to the director of income security because that position no longer exists.

Mr. Speaker, as I review the course of events which have brought us to this day and the course of events that will unfold from this day as a result of these amendments, I am very proud of this Act of the legislature. And I think this is a day all Saskatchewan people can be proud, for we as a province again have shown that we are . . . and we do care about those in our midst who have less. I've always believed, Mr. Speaker, that the soul of a nation, the soul of a nation is gauged by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work that this government is doing to build a strong society for the future. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will move, with pride, second reading of An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Assistance Act, 1966.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I mentioned at the first reading of this Bill, I am very pleased that all levels of government are taking steps to correct some of the flaws in the current social assistance program. The changes indeed are long overdue.

With these changes, we are attempting primarily to tackle the problem of child poverty. It is, in fact, a fact that 43,000 children in this province live in poverty, and so we must do something to try to alleviate the hardship and suffering that they experience daily.

And it is my hope that these income supplement changes will help to dismantle the welfare trap that so many find themselves into. Because under the current system, people on social assistance are penalized when they begin earning an income, and their assistance levels start to drop, and they have a tough time making the transition from welfare to work.

The federal and provincial government is helping to make this transition from welfare to work easier. They have increased payments to working families under the working income supplement. The federal government will increase the working income supplement by \$195 million in July of this year. The Bill before us will bring provincial social assistance in line with federal changes to national assistance programs.

The national child benefit, the increases to the family income supplement in conjunction with the federal working income supplement, these are all initiatives meant to tackle the problem of poverty. But as these initiatives are put in place I have to wonder, with some serious concern, about the people who may fall through the cracks.

I notice, for instance, that there are 12,153 single parents on social assistance case-load. And I question, will they be able to find work in order to derive or to gain benefits from these . . . that are in these changes? And if they are able to find work, we have to be questioning whether or not they will enjoy the benefits, whether or not they will be able to pay for babysitting in order for them to go to work. Are there any provisions for that kind of thing in this Act? I don't see those and so it causes me some concern.

The changes in the Act are the amendments to The Saskatchewan Assistance Act . . . will establish income-tested programs — income-tested programs. This means that those who are working will receive these benefits according to their income. But what about those, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who do not fit into that system? What about those people who can't find work, those people in rural areas, in northern areas, who do not qualify for the extra benefits like the supplementary health coverage and who are struggling to feed their families that are on social assistance cheques.

And I question too, the fact that it is good that supplementary health coverage is there for children of low income families. However, we can never separate the needs of children from the needs of their parents. I see that parents are not qualified — or not entitled rather — to any health coverage; however their children are. I would ask that the minister maybe re-look at these kind of things in the future, in the very near future hopefully, and see to it that low income parents also receive supplementary health coverage.

This government must be held accountable for all the impacts of their changes, and so we must really look carefully at everything that's happening that will affect the lives of the children.

I have some concerns about accountability to ensure that the additional money is in fact reaching the children in families that need it the most. And I am concerned about some measures being taken to ensure that proper communication to recipients, not only organizations, is forthcoming so that everyone will be aware of the new benefits, and aware without having to be contacting their social workers or the Department of Social Services.

The Bill also establishes appeal procedures for people who receive income-tested benefits. If people are dissatisfied with the level of assistance, they can appeal. But the appeal process, to the best of my understanding, is separate from the current appeals process for needs-tested programs. So it seems that there might be some duplication there.

While the Bill deals to a certain extent with eligibility and overpayments, it is imperative that the minister make sure that the benefits are not abused. The Provincial Auditor called on this government to prosecute people who defraud social assistance, and it is vital to the credibility of the system to make sure that there is no fraud. But we must also be aware that social assistance recipients do not lose their dignity when getting help.

Before more detailed examination of this Bill will be done in Committee of the Whole, I would ask that the minister review some of the suggestions that I have put forward. And I will, in Committee of the Whole, be raising more questions about the lack of accountability of this government, and more questions surrounding the genuine well-being of our children in the province.

I have some concerns with the overall outlook of what is best for our children, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are doing . . . taking

these kind of measures in order to eradicate child poverty. That is the basis for changes. But I would suggest that child poverty must also be expressed in terms of psychological, emotional poverty resulting from a system that does not financially or otherwise support parents who choose to stay at home because they believe, in the best interests of their children, that they should be home with them.

(1545)

I question whether the entire child benefit . . . will it be enough to encourage strong family units? Children need the stability of having the full and complete energy and time of their parents — parents who can devote themselves to nurturing in a home environment.

It seems to me that we are taking measures to certainly try to get people out of the welfare trap and I applaud that. But at the same time I see an omission, and that omission is in the fact that we don't seem to be recognizing yet the value of parenting and encouraging . . . making sure we have policy in place that encourages good parenting, and parents to be with their children at home. When we bring in a working income supplement, it presumes that people will be better off if they work. And of course work is vital — it's important.

But are we encouraging some of the parents to go out of the home to work just so that they will get these benefits? And what will be the long-term effects on those children?

More than anything nowadays, I believe that children are missing the nurturing and the constant guidance and support of their parents on a constant basis, on a continuing basis, so that their security is in fact intact because they have their parents around them.

I know that this is an omission and I know that it's something that we have to look at further. But I would now refer this Bill to Committee of the Whole and we'll speak to it more at that 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. 35 — The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1997 Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels

The Chair: — I will begin by inviting the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to have with me today from the Department of Justice, Brent Prenevost, who is Crown counsel; Katrine McKenzie, who's the director of victim services; and behind me, Ron Kruzeniski, who is the Public Trustee.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, first of all welcome to the officials. I'm pleased to see all of them, especially Mr. Kruzeniski. We were in law school together. I think it was back in the Plasticine era. And I'm pleased to see Mr. Kruzeniski again this day.

There is of course one matter about this Bill which is very troubling to myself and my colleagues, and that is that, again, I think the government has just totally missed the point. And there's an Alice in Wonderland atmosphere about this Bill. You see the problem is, Mr. Deputy Chair, we're collecting a lot of money to support victims, we're not spending it on victims, and now we've got a government that's all in a panic about how we invest money for victims instead of how we support victims.

I say this is Alice in Wonderland. This is looking through the wrong end of the telescope. This is not seeing the forest for the trees. This is missing the point.

The solution is so simple, it is so simple, so obvious, that the government missed it. And it's one of those classic examples of where, you know, you don't see the elephant because it's just so big and so clear and so obvious that we didn't see the elephant standing there right in front of us. The solution . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. I wish to draw committee members to Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th Edition, rule no. 336 which states:

Speakers have also consistently attempted to discourage loud private conversations in the Chamber, and have urged those wishing to carry on such exchanges to do so outside the House.

I thank all hon. members for their cooperation in this particular rule.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, for coming to my assistance. However, I want to assure you that I accept that there are some members opposite who feel compelled to make up in volume what they may lack in intellect.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, the issue is just very, very obvious and very, very simple. Instead of getting all worked up about where we're going to invest this money, let us simply use it for the purpose for which it is collected — namely for the compensation of victims.

And that is why I will be moving an amendment, which I know the minister has, and I encourage the minister to support it because it's such a sensible, reasonable amendment, namely that let's not build up a huge victims' fund — let's simply pay it over to the victims.

There are a couple of other points I wish to ask the minister. I hear, I hear my friend . . .

The Chair: — Order.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I hear learned friends and colleagues opposite saying it makes absolutely no sense that

money we raise to support victims would actually be spent on victims. And there again that's an Alice in Wonderland comment, isn't it? Just absolutely Alice in Wonderland. How could I be so crazy, so stupid, so off the mark as to think that when we raise money for victims, we'd actually spend it on victims?

Well what are the figures, Mr. Deputy Chair? The figures are that we're raising 1.8 million a year, nearly 2 million a year on victim impact surcharge. We are spending about 90 per cent of that on victims' services and we are spending a paltry \$300,000 a year on compensation of victims — virtually nothing.

So we have a fund that's collecting nearly 2 million a year, and I say it's scarcely an exaggeration to say that none of it goes to victims, a fund for victims' compensation. It isn't being paid for victims.

I say that we should pay it to victims. And I hear the member opposite from Swift Current say what a crazy idea that you would actually take victims' funds and use it for victims. And he thinks that's an insane suggestion.

Well I'm also concerned. And I want to ask the minister here when this money is transferred to the Public Trustee, the Public Trustee will be able to invest it, will those investments include the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think it's incumbent upon me to respond briefly to some of the comments that were made, and I think I may just start out by the comment made in the paper either yesterday or on Saturday by one of the reporters that, given the question that the hon. member raised on Friday, it may be that he should have read the Act. Well I think today the answer to many of his questions are in the annual report of victim services.

What happened was, 1989 the victim services legislation was introduced and the surcharges were charged, but it took some time to plan all of the types of services that were going to be prepared.

At the point where the program was actually established in September '92, and subsequent to that, there was \$5.5 million in this surcharge fund that had been accumulated. From '92 to '94 the expenditures in this area didn't exceed the revenues so a further amount was accumulated. So in '94 and '95 equity was \$6.4 million.

In the last two years we have taken some very good steps forward in setting up victim services programs throughout the province, and that in fact we are now spending more than the revenue generated. So we have approximately \$4.3 million in the fund.

These funds are there and the plan is clearly to try to set up a way of expending the funds as they come in each year. But as the prudent fiscal managers that we are here in Saskatchewan, we're not going to do that in a way that leaves us short — and we also have Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance to answer to — and we're very careful we plan this well.

On the specific question, the funds that the Public Trustee has are all invested by Greystone Capital corporation. The investment decisions are made by Greystone Capital corporation.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman, but my understanding is that those investment decisions may include the province of Saskatchewan; that the province of Saskatchewan may, in fact, be one of the beneficiaries of the investments.

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That is absolutely correct. If province of Saskatchewan bonds are a good investment, like we think they are, then I hope they would think about investing.

Mr. Hillson: — Nothing wrong with investing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Chair. Nothing wrong with investing in the people for whom this money was raised, namely, the victims.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to tell you that a lady came to my office this past Saturday. And this is for the Crime Compensation Board, I realize, which is somewhat different. But anyway, when she had five children, her husband was killed. The person who killed him was charged with murder, subsequently convicted of manslaughter. This woman received no compensation whatsoever from the Crime Compensation Board.

We now have admission that we've got the victim services which the Minister of Justice in this House told us is collecting nearly 2 million a year; it pays out 300,000 a year in compensation.

Now I realize there are some services in place, and I congratulate the minister for that. But does he not realize that this really works against public confidence in the system when we are told we have in place the victim services, we're told we've got crime compensation in place, and then, I say, we hear stories of a widow left with five children — she gets nothing.

It seems as if we've got all these services and programs in place, but in terms of what we are paying victims, it's virtually nothing. And the minister says, well don't worry; we'll make sure we've got enough programing to spend all the money.

And I'm not sure all the programing in the world is going to give as much confidence to people as what paying the victims would. Or certainly, say, the widow with the five children I just mentioned, I'm not sure that anything would have done her as much good as simply having received some compensation directly to assist her with the raising and the education of her five children.

So I'll again ask the minister: does he see that figure of 300,000 to victims increasing or does he see that programing is really the only priority here?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well my response to that question is quite

simple. The amount of \$300,000 is based on the applications received. If more applications are received, the amount that would be paid out under that victims' program would increase; if less are received, it would be less.

Mr. Hillson: — Is the minister saying that 300,000 is all that's required to compensate victims in this province? Is he satisfied that that's an adequate number? Or is this possibly, is this possibly another case that we've . . . we've now gone so many years in this province — it was actually 10 years; it goes before this minister, before this government in fact — that we had this widow with the five children who applied for compensation and she got nothing.

Is it possible, Minister, that the word has gotten out across Saskatchewan: don't bother even applying; it's not worth your while. You'll pay more for your application and for your lawyer than what you'll ever get in compensation. Is that not possibly why we have no applications before us as opposed to . . . The minister seems to take the view that, well maybe we don't have any victims in Saskatchewan.

It seems to me rather than having no victims in Saskatchewan, the fact you've got no applications on your desk strongly suggests to me that people have simply given up on the system and they really don't expect anything from the system.

In this regard, Mr. Deputy Chair, it seems to me it's not too much different than the fact that when we had utility rate increases, we had a committee going around the province to get reaction. And they came back to Regina and they said, well everybody must be happy with the rate increases because nobody bothered to show up to complain. Well of course the real reason nobody bothered to show up to complain was because they knew they were wasting their breath.

And I really ask, Mr. Minister, is the reason you have no applications for compensation that the people have given up on the system, or do you honestly believe that the problem is that there are no victims who need compensating out there?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, I think, practically, in Saskatchewan we are proud of the types of services that we provide to victims. And we provide those services both in the form of assistance after a crime and also in compensation. What we have at the present time is, we respond to the applications that are received, and we pay out based on those applications and as the rules set out for that.

But I think what I should remind the member, and I think he does know this but he probably has forgotten today, is that victim services programs throughout the province, including the one mentioned earlier today in Meadow Lake, have provided service to many, many hundreds, and I would say, thousands of people.

That happens through police-based victims' services programs. It happens through some community organizations. And it also happens through a couple of really important institutions that have been established in this province. One of them is the integrated child abuse unit in Regina and the other is the

Saskatoon child centre. These are funded out of this, this money, and it provides services to people that need help in times of crisis.

I don't know if it's possible ever to compensate people for their losses when they are victims of a crime, especially if it's a crime where somebody loses their life. And I don't think we should belittle the process or the amounts. But I'm not sure there's enough dollars in the world to compensate somebody who loses a loved one.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I guess we all accept that having your husband killed, no amount of money is going to bring him back or really compensate for the loss. But the fact is the lady I was talking to was left with five under age children. A little bit of money may have assisted with at least the funeral, maybe even possibly a bit of the cost of raising the children, maybe helping to educate the children.

Yes, there's no such thing as perfect compensation in this world. And that's why I've been critical of the minister for using the term, restorative justice, because I think a promise is something that the justice system virtually never delivers. We can't restore — that's the bottom line. And I accept the minister's statement there.

And as I say, that's why I've been critical of ever even using the term, because we don't restore in the justice system. We try and make the best of what is obviously a very bad situation.

But the fact is while we can't restore that widow who lost her husband and is left with five children, we could have given her a little bit of help and we didn't do it.

An Hon. Member: — Could have lessened the hardship.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, we could of lessened the hardship just a little bit and we didn't do it.

Now the minister says I've forgotten about the victim services coordinators. No I haven't. I'm appreciative of their efforts and I haven't criticized them. But does the minister not see that a little bit of direct assistance to our victims would go a long way to maybe easing the burden on them, and maybe even a long way to restoring some public confidence in our justice system.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm having a bit of difficulty with the question and I'll refer once again to the report at page 17. It sets out all of the headings under which payments are made, and that includes things like funeral expenses and concerns that the member has. I assume that the person that he is talking about has applied, but I don't know that.

I think practically, what we have in Saskatchewan is a program of which we can all be proud as it relates to victim services. We are quite willing to look at suggestions about ways that we can improve it. What we are doing here with this piece of legislation is attempting to make better use of the money that was accumulated and will be spent over the next number of years, and that's it. Basically we want to improve the services that we can for victims in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hillson: — Again, though the minister says services to victims, well that's all very well and good, I don't criticize him for that. But could he consider giving a little bit of priority, some of this money as simply compensation to victims, just funnelling it to victims? Does it all have to be in the form of some program? Why can't some of it go simply to victims?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm sorry if my words aren't clear, but services to victims includes the compensation to victims' portion. And as I said before, we respond to the applications received, and if in fact the application's received, and ended up using more of the money, then we would end up spending more of the money.

And practically there is no restriction on the amount that we pay out directly to victims. And I think that may be the simple answer to your question.

So that if there are people that are concerned about this . . . And, you know, as a matter of fact, the information about this program is also included in all of the victim services programs. Victim services coordinators, all those people around the province know about this, and help people if they need to apply for these funds.

So practically there is no restriction on the amount paid directly to victims as compensation, and I see this as a service to victims.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I still say that a clear statement from the minister today in this House that the department will entertain applications for compensation and that it will accept the amendment to hold this fund to half a million in any given fiscal year would go a fair distance to restoring a bit of confidence.

I mean, he's saying now we don't get any applications. I know you don't. Lawyers are telling their clients, don't bother. And you admit that, I mean, we have lots of victims in this province and virtually nothing paid out. And you tell me, well you don't pay out because you don't have applications. Well if you don't have applications that is the proof that people have simply given up.

And a statement from you today in this House saying that you are committed to this program of compensating victims, and I really think that some application forms would appear on your desk and you would find out that in fact there are lots of people out there who qualify and need compensation, and not the great lack of victims that you appear to think there are.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well the report which is here says that in the '95-96 year, which was the last report that we had, there were 239 applications for compensation. And those applications were dealt with in the appropriate course and will continue to be dealt with there.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, I would like to move an amendment to clause 2.

I would like to move an amendment to clause 2 by:

deleting the words "any moneys in the fund" where they occur in subsection (3) and substituting the words "not to exceed five-hundred thousand dollars at the end of any fiscal year,".

And I also have la version française. May it be taken as read, Mr. Deputy Chair.

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

If I may, if you would permit, I would like to just make some comments surrounding assistance to victims of crime. And I would ask at the end of the comments if you could possibly comment on some of the suggestions I put forward.

I've noted that you have said that you plan more government programs in the future surrounding the victims' assistance program, and if I could just give a preamble. It's important to me because I have had a case come before me, in fact of May of '96, where I had to really question whether or not we're looking at the victims of crime and the whole question of what is crime and who should receive assistance.

I had a young aboriginal girl brought to my attention. She had been under the care of the Department of Social Services since she was 9 years old. She's now 15, or she was 15 in 1996.

She'd come to the city from a reserve in an attempt to escape a life that was riddled with sexual and emotional abuse. She ended up talking to a street outreach worker explaining that she needed social assistance so she could have some financial help with her basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

She wanted to go to school, but first she needed to have her basic needs met. When applying for social assistance, she was told that she should go back to the reserve. She couldn't get social assistance because she's from a reserve. To return to the reserve would mean for her a life of complete devastation and hopelessness.

It was explained to a social worker that she was now going to the streets to prostitute herself in order to get some money for her basic needs. It was suggested by an advocate for her that perhaps she could qualify for financial help through the victims' assistance fund. And the answer she and her advocate received was that she was a victim of her own circumstances. This money was not meant to help people like her.

Well perhaps we should rethink how we use money from the victims' assistance and from victims of crime. Perhaps we should assess more carefully who are victims of crime and expand that definition to people such as this young aboriginal girl. The surplus fund at hand could certainly be better put to use in this way rather than placing it in general revenue.

So I would ask the minister if there is any consideration being given to an expansion of this type for victims of crime. And I recognize that definitions have to be put in place under these Acts, but I'm hoping to hear your comments on this please.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well this concern is I think a concern as it relates to many parts of government policy. And one of the difficulties for a young person like that, like you've identified, is this inability for the federal government to sort out what it's going to do with young aboriginal people as they move into the cities. And that's an area where we on the Social Services side have stepped in and basically said, well these are citizens of Saskatchewan and we need to provide social assistance.

This particular fund, the victims' fund, relates to people who have been involved in a crime. And I think from the facts that you relayed, this person was in, I guess, a situation where she was extremely vulnerable to be part victim of a crime, which is an area that maybe we should take a look at.

I think in a lot of ways the kinds of programs that we've set up with the child centre and with the integrated child abuse unit in Regina, have some aspects of helping people like the person that you talked about. But it's not a way of providing social services payment in another way.

But it seems to me that there would be a way to help that kind of a young person in a difficult situation, but it's not directly through this fund. And I guess I would say that our social service network that we have in the province is meant to help people like that, but I don't think it's necessarily specifically here.

Now if in fact the person was involved in a crime, it may be then that the victim services coordinators could be involved and also then, some of the compensation funds.

The Chair: — Order, order. I wish to remind the committee that what we're dealing with is clause 2, which deals with the investment of money through the Public Trustee, and the amendment deals with the amount of money that is to be invested in that manner. And comments on clause 2 of the printed Bill should be focused quite narrowly on that issue.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. If I could qualify then that the amount of money that is being used for assistance to victims could certainly refer to the situation at hand. I am asking the minister to consider the recognition that sexual abuse and people that have been subject to that are in fact victims of crime because it is a criminal act — sexual abuse of minors.

And so I'm asking that the minister simply look at possibly diverting some of these funds, if there are new programs coming into being, to assist victims of crime in this manner. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I can answer very simply. Those crimes are included in this fund. And if you look under the Criminal

Code in the appendix and the regulations, it includes a section 227. There's 271, sexual assault; 272, sexual assault, sexual interference, sexual exploitation. So I think those ones are included.

But practically, I guess if I should speak to the amendment and the basic response is that we are opposed to this amendment.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister and to his officials, welcome.

I've listened with interest, and I stand to lend my support to the amendment proposed by the honourable . . . my colleague from North Battleford. There seems to be an accumulation of monies in a particular fund for a specific reason. And suddenly when we have that massive amount of money that's been accumulated, then it's not serving the purpose for which it's meant.

And I appreciate and recognize the fact that there are all kinds of programs, but the money is meant . . . It's almost like an additional tax. There's a surcharge that's imposed on people for a variety of circumstances they become involved with.

Now if this money is accumulating to this excessive amount, then perhaps there's a couple things might happen. It's not being properly directed and it doesn't go to victims, or perhaps then it should be reduced. And the imposition that's being placed on people that are contributing those funds should then be reduced in a certain amount.

But I strongly would urge consideration be given to accepting this amendment, so that it's not in fact reinvested and perhaps reinvested again as more money for the financial coffers of this government, which is nothing more than additional taxation. Thank you.

The division bells rang from 4:22 p.m. until 4:24 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

McLane	Gantefoer	Osika
Belanger	Hillson	Julé
Aldridge		

Nays — 17

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Whitmore
Upshall	Kowalsky	Pringle
Lorje	Renaud	Nilson
Serby	Hamilton	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Sonntag
Jess	Langford	

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 31 — The Public Trustee
Amendment Act, 1997**

Clauses 1 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm pleased to thank my officials who have been with me today and all of the others who have looked at some of the policy issues surrounding this. And I also thank the members opposite for their questions and suggestions even though we didn't follow all of the ones that they had.

And I would like to move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1630)

**Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential
Amendments Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 apportant des
modifications corrélatives à certaines lois**

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon, beside me, Rick Hischebett, who is Crown counsel, civil law division, Saskatchewan Justice, with a special role in advising the Department of Health. Behind me, Scott Banda, who is general counsel and corporate secretary for the Crown Investments Corporation. And directly behind me, Barry Lacey, who is the director of finance and management services branch of Saskatchewan Health.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — I just wish to say . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Committee members will all appreciate that second reading of a Bill is an opportunity for every member who has a question of the minister to ask said question. And I again very much appreciate the cooperation of all members.

Mr. Hillson: — I actually was rising to say that I didn't have anything to say, Mr. Deputy Chair. I thank the minister for bringing his officials today. I thank them for their attendance; however we have reviewed these amendments and we are satisfied that they are sensible and we do not have any problem with that . . . with them. And therefore we are prepared to let them go through.

I might also say I note that on the last Bill the opposition came closer to defeating the government than at any time since this session started. So we understand why the government is looking somewhat antsy and concerned. Their concern is totally justified. However I wish to assure the minister that this is not the piece of legislation that we will use to bring down the government, as we are content with the provisions of it. Thank you.

The Chair: — Order. I just want to assure members that . . . Order. I want to assure members that the Chair had no intention of promoting himself when I talked of second reading as opposed to Committee of the Whole in my ruling moments ago. We are firmly in Committee of the Whole. The ruling stands.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. There is a House amendment that I would like to propose to the French version of the printed Bill. And the amendment is that I move that:

. . . Clause 4(1) of the French version of the printed Bill by adding (the words) “de l'article 7” after “d'entrée en vigueur”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4 as amended agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

**Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal
(Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997**

Clauses 1 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. Before I do that, I would like to thank my officials. I think I may want to bring this team every time because it totally intimidated the opposition and we had no questions. So thank you very much for coming.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 35 — The Victims of Crime
Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 modifiant
la Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels**

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

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

**Bill No. 31 — The Public Trustee
Amendment Act, 1997**

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

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

(1645)

Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential Amendments Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines lois

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — By leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill 33 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Environment and Resource Management
Vote 26**

The Chair: — Before I call item 1, I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me, Stuart Kramer, my deputy minister; Les Cooke, associate deputy minister of policy and programs; and Ross MacLennan, assistant deputy minister of operations.

Item 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Just a couple of questions. First of all, welcome to your officials.

And the one question I have, in reference to the fact that your department administers collections on behalf of the northern revenue-sharing trust account in terms of the northern lease fees, could you give me the figures in terms of the last two or three years as to what those figures were? I understand when people have a lease in northern Saskatchewan they go to SERM office and they get their lease notice and their lease fee payment from SERM and they go to SERM and they pay this lease. And if so, what's the total amount collected, and what's the total administration fee you charge for the collection of such leases?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well we're off to a good start. Thank you very much, member, for the question. This is a very detailed process, with different lessees and processes. We'd be very happy to get you a detailed response, a written response to that information. I just don't have the figures with me today. Thank you.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And if, since we do have opportunity to revisit the whole issue, if you can perhaps give me the last 10, 12 years in terms of the fluctuations of your, particularly your administration fee.

Secondly, in the essence of the Uranium City situation with the underground tanks, and of course you're aware of the problem that the community has. To date, it appears the community hasn't had much of a response in terms of their fuel farm or their tank farm. Could you give me an update as to what the decision is in reference to this challenge, and also what course of action you have over the next six months to ensure that this community does have adequate supply of heating fuel and also other fuels needed for the community.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you. With response to the Uranium City situation and the availability of having fuel, we're well aware of the situation. And our department along with Northern Affairs are working very closely with the community in Uranium City as well as the oil company that's involved. By all means we want to ensure one way or the other that the community has heating fuel and fuel available for the coming winter.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Again bouncing all over the map, another area that's of concern with reference to the underground storage tanks is the northern village of Beauval.

Speaking with the town administrator several days ago, Elaine Malbeuf, she explains to me a portion of land which was Crown land in and around Beauval forest was transferred from the Crown, in this instance I believe it's SERM, or it could be Economic Development — I'm not sure who owned the property — but none the less the Crown owned the property and transferred the property to the village a number of years ago.

And lo and behold, once they began to divvy up the property, they found out there is some storage tanks from the old days on that property, and now they're faced with the problem of having to fund the removal of the tanks. And would you be able to offer any compensation for the village or offer any support for the village to remove these tanks? Because it's certainly not their fault that these tanks were transferred as part of the land, because it was never disclosed to them.

So would you undertake to find out who would pay for the removal of such tanks? And how soon could that be done?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — This is certainly a problem not only happening in communities like Beauval but a number of communities. And it's very timely that later this week I'll be receiving a report from the committee on contaminated sites liability, where this committee . . . who in the past year and a half have been dealing with the whole issue: who should pay for the removal of tanks and the clean-up?

I can assure you that we'll be in touch with the community of Beauval to offer whatever assistance we have. And depending on what this report comes out with — we don't expect to

implement the recommendations immediately — but it may give us some guidance or direction as to how we can best resolve this problem. So we will be in touch with the community of Beauval.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and a few more questions. One question we have from the village of Green Lake — Marius Bouvier to be exact. He's a retired worker with Sask SERM. He worked many years with you, with your company and with the government.

And Mr. Bouvier has also been heavily involved with trapping. And what he has found — him and other trappers from in and around Green Lake area and other trappers from other communities — in reference to the large-scale forestry industry that's happening within the region, they're quite frankly becoming concerned of a number of issues.

First of all there's several of them that could not access their cabins because the roads that go towards their cabins are being blocked off by the forestry companies. And they aren't able to access the cabins as a result of this road being blocked off.

And the second thing is they haven't had much discussion, nor have they had any direction, as to the concerns that they have regarding compensation for loss of their trapping privileges and trapping rights.

So they are, quite frankly, concerned about the situation. They'd like to see some progress on this matter. And in fact I believe they've written a letter to your colleague, Mr. Goulet, on the whole matter. And I was just wondering, in your discussions and all the negotiations of different forestry companies, be it NorSask or Weyerhaeuser or Mac-Blo or any other forestry companies, has the issue of compensation for displaced trappers ever received high priority? And if it is, where is this whole program at?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — In response to the question, I'd like to say that first of all our new forest resources management Act, integrated management of forestry activities, not only looks at the trees and harvesting of trees, but we do look at other interests in the forest such as trapping.

And in the Green Lake situation we do have a co-management board. And I would suggest to your constituent, approach the co-management board, raise his concerns, and we as the department are certainly committed to try and resolve the conflicts between the forestry company and, in this case, the local trapper. We need to make room for everybody in our forests and I think we're achieving this through our co-management boards.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just to advise you that the co-management board in Green Lake has been contacted and in fact the chairperson of the co-management board in Green Lake was one of the individuals that did write a letter to the Minister of Northern Affairs, and apparently the response has not been received. There's been very little information back and forth.

So as a result, I'm urging you as the minister responsible for Environment and Resource Management and ultimately the forestry companies, that we have continual and direct dialogue with the people like Mr. Bouvier and Mr. McKay of Green Lake, who is the chairman of the local co-management board.

So co-management boards need to play a stronger role. And certainly the trapping industry needs to be protected and enhanced when it comes to co-existence between the forestry companies and the local, traditional resource gatherers and users.

But just for clarification, on page 8 of your annual report for '95-96, am I to understand that under the value of primary forest products, that the primary value is 512.461 million? Is that the correct figure?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Yes, that figure is correct. Our forests are very important to the whole economy of the province.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I'd like to also thank your officials for their questions . . . or their answers.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

On page 1329 of *Hansard* No. 39A Friday, May 2, 1996, 10 a.m., under **THIRD READINGS** the title **Bill No. 29 — The Residential Services Amendment Act, 1997** should read **Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 1997**.

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Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential Amendments Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines lois

Nilson	1419
Hillson	1419

Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997

Nilson	1419
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THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 35 — The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels

Nilson	1419
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Bill No. 31 — The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 1997

Nilson	1419
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Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Consequential Amendments Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 apportant modifications corrélatives à certaines lois

Nilson	1420
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Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997

Nilson	1420
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COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Environment and Resource Management — Vote 26

Scott	1420
Belanger	1420

CORRIGENDUM 1422