The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of many residents in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to protect the Dore, Smoothstone lakes area by declaring it an accessible, protected wilderness area where sustainable, traditional cultural values and activities are maintained.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are primarily from the city of Saskatoon, but I also note that they are from the city of Moose Jaw as well. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also rise with my hon. colleague to present a petition on behalf of the good citizens of Melville, Grayson, and Weyburn. The prayer reads:

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

Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would also like to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Melville.

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

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also would like to present petitions, but to do with creation of regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads:

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

The communities involved in the petition are from Fertile and Gainsborough, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That the conditions of some highways connecting communities in northern Saskatchewan are at times impassable; that these highways, including Highway No. 155, are crucial to the safety and health of northern residents, and that the government's refusal to rebuild these highways is preventing access to emergency care, to education, to health, and to sharing of resources amongst communities;

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the rebuilding of Highway No. 155, thereby ensuring adequate access for residents of the communities linked by this road, including Dillon, Patuanak, Turnor Lake, and Pinehouse, and an access road to Garson Lake.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from Turnor Lake. And I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan who are gravely concerned about the problems surrounding child prostitution. And the pray reads, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reform provincial legislation that may help save the lives of children who are exploited for sex in public places and stop prostitution which jeopardizes the safety of all citizens and their children.

The petitioners on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens praying for the establishment of an accessible wilderness area surrounding the Dore and Smoothstone lakes. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

> Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to protect the Dore, Smoothstone lakes area by declaring it an accessible, protected wilderness area, where sustainable, traditional cultural values and activities are maintained.

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

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who have signed these petitions are from the communities of Moose Jaw, Prud'homme, Waldheim, and the city of Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a new petition to present today.

To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in legislature assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that strippers in bars cause tensions in marriages, relationships and families, which can end up destroying those marriages, relationships, and families; that strippers in bars in many instances attract undesirables and encourage drunk and rowdy behaviour; that strippers in bars encourage a distorted view of human sexuality which has proven to lead to promiscuous and violent sexual behaviour; that strippers in bars lead to an increase in crime, such as rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse, placing the children and women in our communities at greater risk; that strippers in bars create an atmosphere that is ripe for prostitution.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping, and invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

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

These petitions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, come from the community of Alsask.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too have a petition I wish to present to the Assembly. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action is necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping and invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

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

The petitions I have are signed by individuals from the communities of Dinsmore and Wiseton. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also to present a petition, and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatsoever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping and invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact legislation banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is served.

And these are signed by people from Martensville, from Dalmeny, and from Osler. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime in Saskatchewan;

Humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges;

Humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reform provincial legislation to help children who are being exploited for sexual purposes; and finally

Humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the rebuilding of Highway No. 155.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next, move first reading of a Bill — the Chief Electoral Officer accountability Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Northwest, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, a group of students. They're from the grade 5 class at Silverwood Heights School. They're seated in your west gallery. They're accompanied here today by their teachers, B. Gallo, and C. Wright; and chaperons T. LaBrash, Mrs. Staples, and Mrs. Dauvin.

I had a group of students from my constituency here yesterday that I was fortunate to be able to meet with, and I look forward to the opportunity to meeting with this group from Saskatoon after the question period. And I would ask all members to join me in making this group feel welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, a group of students and their chaperons that are seated in your gallery.

The group of students come from the Canora Composite School. They are grade 12 students at the Canora Composite. They are 42 in number and they had the pleasure of meeting with the Speaker back last fall when the Speaker was on tour. And I know they had a lot of questions for the Speaker, and I think conducted themselves very well.

I'd like to also introduce two teachers that are with the group — Mr. Larry Neufeld and Mr. Merv Tomski. And I know that these are chaperons but I believe they also serve in the capacity of bus drivers, Kathy Thomas and Lawrence Stephanowich.

I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming this group to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues in the House, I'd like to introduce a large number of guests in the west gallery.

This year, 1997, we're celebrating the 25th anniversary of the occupational health and safety program in Saskatchewan. And like so many good things in this country, this is one of those that started in Saskatchewan and became a model for the rest of Canada.

The guests in the west gallery are joining us to celebrate this anniversary today and I would ask each of them to stand when I introduce them and to remain standing, and then we can welcome them in the usual manner at the end of the introductions.

The first person that I would like to introduce is Mr. Gordon Snyder. Mr. Snyder, you've got to stand up here. There you are. Mr. Snyder was a member of this Assembly for, I think 22 years, 11 of them as minister of Labour. And in 1972 he oversaw the development of a radically new approach to occupational health and safety and he steered it through this legislature and oversaw its administration until he left that office involuntarily in 1982.

Sandra Morgan is the current deputy minister of Labour, and I ask Sandra to stand. Jeff Parr is the current executive director of the occupational health and safety division.

With us are also four employees of the department who have been involved with the health and safety program for all 25 years or for almost all of the 25 years that it's been in effect. And I'd like to introduce them: Gail Romaniuk, Faye Olynyk, Herb Wooley, and Fayek Kelada. Mary Maxwell is the Chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Council.

Bob Guest is a member of the Farm Health and Safety Council. Jacquie Griffiths chairs the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's Occupational Health and Safety Committee. Warren Bobbee and George Kwas are with the Canadian Society for Safety Engineering, who we work with in promoting Occupational Health and Safety Week, coming up the first week of June.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that good legislation is only part of what it takes to prevent workplace injuries. We know that education and awareness is very important as well and I'm pleased that we have a number of guests who are involved in the early safety training program in the Estevan area. This is a new and innovative program, as so many things are that come out of the Estevan area, providing for safety training for young people before they enter the workforce.

Wayne Irwin is the Chair of the program steering committee. Sherry Leach is the Co-Chair. Other members of the steering committee with us today are Gord McMurtry, Ray Frehlick, Lloyd Stewart, and Rick Boyle, who is substituting for Peter Hammond. Also with us are two people who worked with the steering committee and helped us to get this very exciting program going, Gail Mehler and Angela Radcliffe.

Four of the students who took the training this year are also here: Ryan Benjamin, Russell Topinka, Cory Olson, and Ryan Irwin.

The Premier and I will be meeting with our guests after question period in the members' dining room by the cafeteria and I would invite all members who are able to get away from the House to join us in welcoming these people. So I'd ask all my colleagues to welcome these very important people to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the third party I would also like to welcome the group here dealing with occupational health and safety. In particular I'd like to welcome Mary Ellen Benjamin and her son Ryan, who are here. And a special welcome to Wayne Irwin who . . . Mary Ellen and Ryan are both from my constituency and Wayne wishes he still was, but he has to live in Estevan now.

I ask everyone to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to add to the words of the minister in terms of welcoming all of the individuals who represent the occupational health and safety division and we thank you very much for being present this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me a great privilege this afternoon to introduce probably the largest group here today, 84 students from Venture Heights. They're in the east gallery. They're grade 7 and 8 students here and I'm sure they'll have a good time. I'll be meeting with them a little later on to answer a few questions.

With them are teachers Debra Rodger, Diane Beaulé, Anita Dyck, Bob Thomas, and chaperon Sheri Protz.

Would you join with me to welcome these people to Regina and to our legislature this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me a pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Larry Birkbeck, former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Moosomin. And accompanying him this afternoon is Mary Arpin.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may say, there are those who despair and think that Tories are beyond redemption. Not so. Mr. Birkbeck is working very hard for the re-election of the Prime Minister and the Liberal government. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to introduce a guest from my constituency that is sitting in the west gallery, sitting amongst all the occupational health and safety folks that are here this afternoon. And that's Bill Robertson, who is a well-known Saskatchewan writer and poet.

He recently had a session at a local restaurant, introducing his new book. And I'm sorry I wasn't able to be there, Bill, but I understand it was extremely witty. We are now on the verge of introducing Saskatchewan poets and writers to our high school students, and I'm sure that Bill's writings will be amongst the curriculum that will be taught to Saskatchewan students. So welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a guest in the west gallery from Saskatoon, Lorraine Holowachuk. Lorraine and I have been working on a Justice project for the last two years, and she's here this afternoon to meet with the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the Assembly, a very remarkable young woman seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to ask her to stand as I introduce her.

Her name is Jade Rosin. Jade is a high school student at Langenburg and she is spending the day being my shadow. She's following me around to see just exactly what it is that MLAs do in a day. And in the few hours that I've had to get to know her, she really is, as I said, a remarkable young woman.

She's a grade A student in all her courses, has a special interest in writing, and is possibly looking at a career in journalism. She tells me she's also in the process of writing a novel.

So I am delighted to spend some time with her, and I ask you all to join me in extending a very warm welcome to Jade. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just happened to notice that there's a couple of other notable people from my constituency and elsewhere — Mr. Patrick Close, Mr. Brian Gladwell. Patrick is with CARFAC (Canadian Artists Representation) and Brian Gladwell is a very noted Saskatchewan artist. And if you could welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Occupational Health and Safety 25th Anniversary

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the provincial election of 1971 one of the promises made by the New Democratic Party was to establish a program of occupational health. By the end of the legislative session of 1972, the occupational health and safety branch was created in the Department of Labour, and the occupational health Act was passed. Following our lead, every province in Canada now has it's own Act. That is the way NDP (New Democratic Party) governments handle election promises.

Today we are paying tribute to the visionary members of that government who once again made Saskatchewan the vanguard of progressiveness in North America. Some of them are with us today, and have been introduced in this Assembly.

Among the many points that can be made and should be made, I wish to highlight two. First, this monumental legislation was the creation of both elected officials and of committed individuals who saw the need firsthand — individuals like Gordon Snyder, like Dr. John Markham at the University of Saskatchewan, Don Ching, Bill Gilbey of the Grain Services Union, and Dr. C. Dennis of the department of public health.

Secondly, on this anniversary, legislators, educators, employers, and employees alike should remind and recommit ourselves to the basic and profound proposition that created this legislation. — that a decent day's work demands a decent day's pay in a decent and safe workplace; so that at the end of the day, all workers can return to their homes and families in good health and with peace of mind. . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, today does mark the 25th anniversary of occupational health and safety in the province of Saskatchewan. And it is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today and recognize the value of workers and the importance of such legislation to the province of Saskatchewan.

We have come a long way as a society from the times of the

Industrial Revolution to create a healthy and safe environment for workers, and we all think that that is very important. After all, more and more individuals spend a substantial portion of their day in the workplace. The positive or negative experiences that we have there will have far-reaching social, emotional, and economic costs, not only for that individual but for their families, their employees, and their community at large.

As the nature of work in society continues to change, so must our definition of a safe and healthy workplace. Over the years, we've seen this legislation evolve to encompass not only those obstacles which cause direct physical harm, but also less obvious workplace dangers such as sexual harassment.

In order for Saskatchewan to progress into the 21st century as a healthy society, it is important that we do everything we can to keep our workers safe. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Apology for Remarks on Federal Leaders' Debate

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday I made a statement in this Assembly that attempted to provide some light-hearted comments on the federal leaders' debate the previous night. In retrospect, I realize now that those comments were unfortunate, and I would say upon reviewing the verbatim of this Assembly, that they were also inappropriate.

Since my election to this Assembly in 1995 I have attempted to bring about a renewed vigour and spirit to debate in this House. However, at no time have I intended to offend anyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is now clear that some of those remarks were indeed hurtful, and for that I apologize.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Early Safety Training Support Program

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April I stood here and commented on the government's commitment to our youth by providing an $8,000 grant to the early safety training student support program administered in Estevan. Providing a safe workplace and preventing injuries are two extremely important issues that government and industry together must address.

The recent changes to the occupational health and safety regulations have placed Saskatchewan at the forefront of workplace health and safety. These changes, Mr. Speaker, will enhance the early safety training program. Not only will this program be a part of the curriculum in Estevan, it will now give every high school the opportunity to adopt safety training as part of their curriculum.

This will benefit our youth by educating them about the rights and the hazards of the workplace. Students will benefit with additional knowledge about the workplace environment, and industry will have the opportunity to hire safety-conscious employees.

I want to congratulate everyone involved with the early safety training program for their work and commitment to our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Head Literary Events

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very proud to have in my constituency the town of Indian Head.

Indian Head is the true literacy capital of Saskatchewan, regardless of what the Speaker and the Hon. Minister of Social Services might have to say. Two upcoming events in Indian Head support my claim.

Tonight Canadian mystery writer, Alison Gordon — who was introduced in this Assembly two years ago — will be in our library. She will be reading from her new mystery, *Prairie Hardball*. Part of this book is set in Indian Head. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand the good parts take place in Indian Head, and the murders take place in North Battleford.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — And next Thursday, Indian Head will celebrate the life and work of Saskatchewan's greatest writer, Sinclair Ross, a writer the member from Saskatoon Greystone recently mentioned in the Assembly.

In a life that had more than a little bit of gypsy to it, Sinclair Ross spent a few years in Indian Head where he attended the local school. Some of our elderly residents remember him. Those of us who are too young have had his excellent books about Saskatchewan life during the Dirty Thirties to remind us of his talent.

Indian Head is a short drive from Regina and I welcome all members to venture out to Indian Head to attend one or both of these events. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Head Sports Hall of Fame and Museum Honours Inductees

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, Indian Head Sports Hall of Fame and Museum has been open to the public since 1992. There are eight directors who are active. Ken McCabe is the president and is the person who has most driven this hall of fame and museum. Without his vision, drive, and energy, the Indian Head Sports Hall of Fame and Museum simply would not exist.

Ken and the entire board — indeed all of the people of Indian Head trading area — are very proud of their sports history.

This year has an impressive list of inductees. The star-studded head table includes Barry Trapp of Hockey Canada, a Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame representative; CKRM's Willie Cole; and it is anchored by the real heavyweights, Bob Poley as guest speaker, and their own MLA, Lorne Scott, who

will be not inducted for his athletic ability, but I know that the good people of Indian Head are very proud of his October 1996 international wild waterfowl conservation award presented to him in Milwaukee.

Tickets are still available through *Indian Head-Wolseley News*. I congratulate Ken McCabe, the board, inductees, and indeed all of the good people of Indian Head trading area, for this great initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pilot Butte School Performs *Wizard of Oz*

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last Wednesday evening my colleague, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, and I had the privilege and pleasure to drop into the Land of Oz with Dorothy and Toto and over 300 students, parents, and friends of Pilot Butte School.

The gymnasium was transformed into a magical place under the artful guidance of co-directors Daryl Dozlaw and Carolyn Gaudry.

Jodi Draghici sang and danced her way down the Yellow Brick Road with the able, sometimes comical assistance of Scarecrow, Nathan Seon; Tin Woodsman, Matt Bialowas; Lion, Cory Paetsch; and fierce guard dog, Dudley Philips — all on the way to see the mighty Oz, Luke Truitt.

You will remember the struggle between good and evil. In this case Glinda, Dana Istace, the good witch, and the wonderfully wicked Sara Kokoski.

The cast of thousands made sure everyone had a part to play, be it singing flowers, flying monkeys, fighting trees, or energetic munchkins.

I'd like to congratulate Mr. Jakubowski, the principal, his entire staff, the numerous volunteers, and students, for their hard work and enthusiasm to put together such an entertaining evening.

Residents of Pilot Butte must also be thanked for the community support offered to the activities and programs of Pilot Butte School.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Literary Contest Winner

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan has about 4 per cent of Canada's population. Out of that number however, has come a disproportionate number of our nation's exceptional writers, artists, actors, and may I say, politicians.

There are as many theories as there are writers for why this is so. But the fact remains that we are far more than the geographic centre of Canada.

And our writers start young. An outstanding case in point can be found in the village of Pierceland in my constituency. Bronwyn Stoddard is an 11-year-old grade 6 student at the Pierceland School. Already she has written a number of poems and short stories, and one of her poems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has recently won the junior poetry category at the national Royal Canadian Legion literary and poster contest.

Bronwyn, representing the 4 per cent of Canadians I referred to earlier, has outperformed the other 96 per cent of Canadians. As anyone in Saskatchewan would say, the odds were just about right.

Her winning poem was entitled, "Remember," a poem about Remembrance Day. Right now we are six months away from the November 11 ceremonies, but I believe that Bronwyn's poem will be quoted at more than one cenotaph on that day. It is remarkable for its maturity and for its refusal to sentimentalize what was not a happy period in our history.

Gordon McNeil, Legion zone commander from Loon Lake, will be presenting the national award to Bronwyn, and her poem will be published in the *Legion* magazine, along with the other winning entries.

I congratulate Bronwyn Stoddard and confidently predict that this will not be her last publication.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Chief Electoral Officer Report

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday I asked the government to release the Kuziak report. The member opposite said, and I quote from *Hansard*:

> . . . we haven't (gotten) the report . . . We have no indication . . . that it has been completed.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report is done. But the Chief Electoral Officer says he is withholding it until after the federal election, on the advice of the Justice department. Is this not political interference?

Even the former Justice minister is troubled by this. And today's *Leader-Post* quoted him as saying, it seems odd to me. I think when the report's completed, it should be filed with us.

And the minister suggested yesterday that I was going over the edge? Well it seems very odd to us, Mr. Speaker. It clearly smacks of political manipulation.

Will the Minister of Justice explain why his department is interfering?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, he hasn't gone over the edge yet, but just a moment, he's not finished.

I think I made my position very clear. When I left the Chamber yesterday, I was interviewed by a journalist who told me that he had spoken to Mr. Kuziak, who said the report was completed. I said that if that's the case it should be filed, that I couldn't see any justification for withholding it.

No one from the government side, or none of our employees, have been in touch with him to try and get him to suppress this report or delay it in any way. That's his decision. But I would hope that he files it and files it soon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister opposite indicated yesterday that this government tries to respect the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer in every way possible. But how independent can this officer be with the Justice department interfering in the process? How effective can he be when he answers to Executive Council? This latest incident clearly shows the Chief Electoral Officer should be independent of cabinet. Even the Premier himself likes the idea of making the Chief Electoral Officer an independent officer of the legislature. And I quote from a June 8, 1996 *Leader-Post* article: "It's got lots of merit to it."

We will be introducing a Bill, the Chief Electoral Officer accountability Act, which will have the officer report directly to the Assembly, as does the Ombudsman, as does the auditor, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Will the government support our Bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well as we always do, Mr. Speaker, we will take a careful look at it. I do think the member, while maybe not having gone over the edge yet, has gone right up to edge and looked over it with his suggestion that the Department of Justice has somehow interfered with this matter.

I think that history may show us, that history may show us that the Chief Electoral Officer had consulted the Department of Justice with respect to some of the questions that arose in the report. I don't know that, but that is my surmise. And I think that any suggestion that the Department of Justice has interfered in this matter is very likely unwarranted and certainly premature.

Now let's hope that the member doesn't take the additional step and go spinning off into space the way he used to last year with respect to these questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — In response about spinning off into space, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we're trying to do, what we have been trying to do, is to restore some public confidence in this entire political process. But when the NDP government suppresses reports that might prove embarrassing, it is being disrespectful to this entire process. Quit interfering. Get out of the way and allow the Chief Electoral Officer to do his job and release his report immediately.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — He did it again, Mr. Speaker. He cannot restrain himself. He did it day after day after day last year and here he went today spinning off into space with allegations of suppression and interference which just plainly are not true, and that member knows it. That member knows it. He's political grandstanding over a situation where an officer, where the Chief Electoral Officer, who must retain a degree of independence and autonomy from government, who is not subject to our orders, has made a decision — maybe the wrong decision. But to suggest that the government was in any way involved with him making that decision is just patently false.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Police Services Cost-sharing

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On April 10 in this House I asked the minister of Municipal Affairs if she was soon going to be forcing RMs (rural municipality) and smaller villages to pay a portion of police costs, and she said no, for the time being the status quo is what's in force; there's no move to change that.

Well then late in the session, late in the day, the eleventh hour, wham, we see a Bill before this legislature that would force RMs and small villages to pay for police costs, coming in 1997 — same year as reassessment, the same year as 29 million disappears from funding to municipalities, the same year as the road access program is gone, same year as the promise of 10 per cent VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues disappears.

Now the principle that all Saskatchewan people are going to have to make a contribution for police costs may be in order, but why did you have to hit them right now in this year when you've hit them so many other times in so many other ways?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I don't know if I heard the correct . . . the word there but I believe the minister . . . or the member did not use some parliamentary language and I would ask him to restate. But I will allow the question to go until I read the verbatim.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, when I was asked previously whether we were going to charge, the legislation hadn't been introduced and I said, no. On that day, the status quo was there.

The legislation has been introduced, has had second reading yesterday, and there is no time frame on the measures that would be enabled by those changes. So there is not a date. It's not a foregone conclusion that it will occur in this year. The amendments are enabling.

And you know — you know — that it is a burden on municipalities of population over 500 who have to pay for policing versus those who don't. And it needs to at some point in time be rationalized, and this is enabling. But there is no time frame on it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — I think I get it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What the minister of Municipal Affairs is telling me is that this may be the word today, but what the word is tomorrow, she can't tell us. So what's going on and what the story is, well that just changes from day to day.

But this is an insult to local taxpayers — that there's nothing in this legislation or the minister's statement that tells us how hard she's going to hit the rural municipalities. Before the Liberal opposition can support this, we need some figures or the formula.

I'm sure the minister knows what she intends to do; what rural municipality ratepayers are going to have come up with. Why is she hiding it? Or is this just another case that the bad news is being held off until after the close of this session or after the close of the federal election? Why can't she give us the whole story now? Let us know how hard she's going to hit rural municipal ratepayers on this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, rather than grandstanding in this House over an issue, the member will have ample time in Committee of the Whole to raise all of his questions. And I'd like to quote to the member the statements that he made yesterday, quoted from *Hansard* after the second reading. This is Mr. Hillson, member from North Battleford. I would just . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now I'm sure that the minister has realized her error of using proper names in the House.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from *Hansard* where the name is. This is what the member from North Battleford said yesterday:

> I would just say that the principle behind this legislation (referring to the police legislation) — namely that all residents of the province will have to contribute something towards their police services — is one that we accept and one which is reasonable.

That's what the member said yesterday.

Let me say this. The Liberal government in Ottawa is making any rationalization more difficult by choosing this year to require that municipalities that have detachments pay the taxes and the maintenance costs on the federal buildings in their town. They're making it more difficult. That's what the Liberals do to offload onto municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Futures Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to ring-a-ding Lily, but after the last two answers, I'm not sure anybody's home.

Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of Municipal Government issued a news release yesterday confirming the elimination of the futures program. She indicates that the $16 million pay-out to RMs as part of the wind-up program will ease the financial pressure on rural municipalities. Madam Minister, the $16 million is not new money. These are funds owed to RMs for roads which have already been built.

Madam Minister, why are you misleading the people of Saskatchewan? Will you admit this is actually the money that you owe these municipalities from past years and it is not new money?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, speaking of not . . . you know, try to explain something to the members opposite, and you can never get through because the lines are always busy.

An Hon. Member: — That's right. Always busy, or off the hook.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, or off the hook.

As the member opposite knows, the futures program was a flawed program, in that there never was, when it was instituted, a schedule of when the municipalities could expect to see their money back. There was nothing in the plan. So what happened is, municipalities were able to build roads from future allocations, building up a liability on the part of the government and an accounts receivable on their part. We wanted to end the program, reduce the liabilities. We'll take a look at it. If it's warranted that there should be a program of that kind, we'll certainly make the design better so that there are clearer time lines when they'd get their money back. Now they have it all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's only one flaw to do with Municipal Government and it's across there on the chair of the Minister of Municipal Government.

Madam Minister, your sanctimonious news release also notes that RMs are free to undertake road building activity beyond their construction allocation on their own. Well if you know anything about municipal government you would know that RMs cannot do it on their own. And that is why the futures program was so important. The futures program cost this government no extra money and it has merely extended the yearly allotment of funding to RMs so they could carry out road construction.

Well, Madam Minister, you are slashing a program that served our local governments well, also served our taxpayers well. If you have any commitment to the rural municipalities, tell this House what future programs will be replaced with, and what commitment do you have to RMs that a new program is being developed which will allow them to do important local road work with a long-term plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways has tabled a transportation plan. There are planning councils active in the province. In the South West Transportation Council, where many municipalities, 107 municipalities, are working together to come up with a rational, shared plan for transportation needs.

I think it's incredible that the member opposite would defend a program which was interest-free loans by municipalities to the provincial treasury. It was obscene and that's why we ended it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporation Management Salaries

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the SaskPower Minister. Mr. Minister, late last year SaskPower gave raises to about two-thirds of its managers, averaging about 8 per cent. Of course Jack Messer led the way, boosting his base salary to over $166,000, an 8 per cent increase, while rank and file SaskPower employees got just 1 per cent last year. Mr. Minister, we have also reviewed the contracts of senior SaskEnergy officials and found that several received pay raises on January 1, ranging from 5 to 25 per cent.

Mr. Minister, do you think it's fair that senior executives of SaskPower and SaskEnergy are receiving hefty pay hikes while rank and file workers get just 1 per cent and consumers continue to pay record high utility rates?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by correcting the member. With respect to utility rates in this province, we stack up against any other jurisdiction. And I want to say to that member, that SaskEnergy rates at this point in time are the lowest not only in the western Canada, they are the lowest rates in all of Canada. And I think all of the people that work in that corporation should be commended for that work.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, to the rates that the CEOs (chief executive officer) and the senior management of these corporations are receiving, if you stack them up against any other utility in Canada and in North America, you will find that they are not by any stretch, even close to an average pay.

I want to say that we have been, Mr. Speaker, through the collective bargaining process, have dealt with our in-scope employees. What we do across the piece with respect to the management salaries, I think has been reasonable and I think it's been fair and I think we've got a hard-working bunch of people in those corporations who serve the people of Saskatchewan very well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. This morning on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) *Newsworld*, I heard Alexa McDonough say that any family earning less than $100,000 a year in Canada is living in virtual poverty. So I guess the NDP are simply trying to fight poverty by giving Jack Messer and other senior appointees hefty pay hikes. I hope Jack is managing to make ends meet with his 166 grand, plus benefits.

Mr. Minister, why the double standard? Why do senior officials like Jack Messer get big raises while rank and file employees have their wages virtually frozen?

Immediately after question period, I will be introducing an Act to Maintain the Equality of Senior Staff and Employee Raises, and by a strange coincidence, the initials of this Bill work out to the Messer Act. The Messer Act will ensure that senior management of Crown corporations are prohibited from giving themselves larger raises than that received by in-scope employees through their collective agreement. Will you support the Messer Act?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, without having a look at the legislation, it's very difficult to comment. But I would want to say, given the initiatives of most of what the Progressive Conservatives have been involved in politically in this province for the last 20 years, I would probably want to exempt myself.

I want to say to the member opposite, under your administration, one George Hill was paid 450,000 a year, the same job that's being done right now by Mr. Messer for 166,000. The average CEO for a Canadian utility is paid $595,000 a year, much more than the 166 paid by the CEO of SaskPower.

So I say to the member opposite, I say as I said the other day — a little bit of selective amnesia the member has got. He forgets the salary that was paid to Mr. Hill — almost half a million dollars; the same job now being done by what is a very capable CEO for $166,000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

School Absence Investigations

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, we're both familiar with the case in Saskatoon where two children, 10 and 12, have not been in school. In fact the 10-year-old has been denied access to an education for months and months. The astonishing thing is that as far as we both know, neither of these brothers have been formally suspended or expelled. No one involved in this case has been forthcoming or they have provided completely conflicting information.

Madam Minister, who has the responsibility and jurisdiction to investigate in depth what is happening in a case such as this?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must admit that I am not familiar with the case that the member refers to. There may have been correspondence sent to my office which has been referred to the department. So I just can't recall what exactly she's talking about, but I can assure the member that at the end of question period I will look into the situation and determine how best to ensure that these young

people are in fact in school.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Madam Minister, I have your letter here. My office has been in touch with your office, and you have signed the letter, Madam Minister.

It came as quite a surprise to me to learn that this is not an isolated case. It has become so common that new terms have been created, terms not in your Education Act — terms like "disinvited" and terms like "deemed exempt from attending." There is a troubling trend here — and it's primarily urban — where children as young as seven are being denied access to an education. And if I know this, Madam Minister, then you most certainly do.

What is your government doing about the estimated 319 such disinvited children in Saskatoon alone?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what I can assure the member is that this government two years ago introduced a program in excess of $5 million to ensure that children, particularly with special needs, children that had behaviour that was difficult in terms of classroom management, would have access to additional programs through their school division. And there was recognition to the school divisions for the children that I've referred to.

What I can say to the member is that according to The Education Act, all young people in this province between the age of 6 and 21 are entitled to an education, an education that is deemed appropriate to their particular learning needs and deemed appropriate to their special needs.

What I can assure the member is that I will take her question and deal with her question at the close of question period, because I'm not familiar with the specifics of the case that she's referring to. I literally get hundreds of letters each month and I can't recall this specific case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, Madam Minister, if you're getting hundreds of letters pertaining to this particular issue, I most certainly think that you should be able to advise this Assembly what the action is going to be on the part of your government.

There appears to be no consciousness at all as to what these children are being suspended to — not suspended for, but suspended to, Madam Minister. Now I've provided you with pages 7 and 8 of the report of the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate which states, and I quote:

> . . . parents have very limited opportunities to appeal decisions made by school authorities . . . (and) school boards . . . and there is no provincial mechanism in place to ensure that a concern raised by a parent will be dealt with in a fair and consistent manner.

Now let's put the facts on the table here. One case like this one raised today is too many. And there is no plan in place by your department to fix a serious, serious problem . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The member has been very long in her preamble and I would ask her to put her question directly, please.

Ms. Haverstock: — I'll put the question. Madam Minister, will your government as a first step determine who, in a neutral capacity, will have the jurisdiction to deal with children being denied access to education, as well as dealing with their parents; and will your government commit the funding necessary to support this important work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can assure the member is that immediately after question period I will get information from my department as to the specifics of the case that she is referring to.

What I can assure the member is that this government is interested in ensuring that every student in this province who is between the age of 6 and 21 and does not yet have a grade 12 education, has access to an educational program that meets their specific learning needs. That is our obligation under the terms of The Education Act.

What I can assure the member is that we will make sure immediately after question period that the case that she references is dealt with. That's what I can assure the member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Reform

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health or his designate. Because of your health care cut-backs, Saskatchewan nurses are injuring themselves on the job. Heavy lifting of patients that used to be done by two or three nurses is now often left to just one nurse. As a result nurses are hurting their backs, having to take sick leave to recover, or ending up in the hospital. This could very well cost taxpayers more money than it would have to properly staff facilities in the first place.

Mr. Minister, our caucus's health care bill of rights would ensure that staff levels are safe for both patients and nurses on the job. Mr. Minister you should have no problem supporting this legislation because it would deal with situations just like this one. It would provide Saskatchewan families and nurses with the security and stability they need.

Why are you refusing to provide Saskatchewan people with what they deserve? Won't you support our health care bill of rights?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in this budget year delivered . . . the budget delivered March 20, the district boards of the province of Saskatchewan will receive $51.3 million, or 5.2 per cent increase in funding, over the budget the year before. That's after back-filling every one of the federal Liberal cuts.

This is a 5.2 per cent increase — $51 million — to do exactly what we hope the member and I would agree on, and that's to provide a safe workplace for our staff.

Now I just find it passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that that party would be raising . . . because they and their right-wing colleagues, as we all know, are promoting some kind of a two tiered . . . I call it the Americanized Republican system. Now I want to just give an example, Mr. Speaker, of what that means.

I have here in my hand a bill, a bill for six days of hospitalization in the United States of America. What's the bill worth? — $80,000. That's the kind of system that these folks, and their Reform friends, and the Liberals too, promote. This two-tiered, you-pay-as-you-go medicare. That's what they've got in the U.S. (United States), Mr. Speaker. We're not interested . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 235 — The Maintenance of Equality of Senior Staff and Employee Raises ("MESSER") Act

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill No. 235, The Maintenance of Equality of Senior Staff and Employee Raises ("MESSER") Act.

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

(1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I request that item 1, question 66 be converted to order for return (debatable).

And with leave, that item 2, question 67 also be converted. And with leave, that item 3, question 68, item 4, question 69, item 5, question 70, I hereby table the responses for these last three questions — 68, 69, and 70 — in the interest of open, accountable, and responsible government.

The Deputy Speaker: — Leave has been requested by the Government Whip to table answer to 67, and to table answers 68, 69, and 70. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 69

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 69 — The Police Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to make a few comments regarding Bill No. 69. And I think all government members, and certainly the minister responsible, is aware of the concerns that this side of the Assembly has in regards to the Bill.

In view of the fact that while the minister would lead us to believe that all the levels of government in this province are in agreement with this Bill, certainly SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) officials do have a problem, and individuals who represent small jurisdictions in the province of Saskatchewan, small communities who are now going to face an added cost that they didn't have before.

An added cost which, I think you will find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take a close look at it, you will find many of these small communities, while they may not disagree with putting some money . . . monetary funds into a police support system, on many occasions find that they don't really feel that they really receive a lot of police support. While they're just a phone call away, the presence on a number of occasions or most of the time really isn't that visible.

And I think that's one of the biggest arguments that small communities, small hamlets, and certainly rural governments have had over the past number of years with the way costs, the policing costs, is certainly covered in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now the minister indicated that there's been consultation with SARM, SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

I trust, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're not being led to believe that there's total agreement on this, because I know there isn't. I know that there are some major concerns yet, some concerns that individuals in these levels of government certainly feel need to be addressed, and I think some issues that need to be raised and some clarifications before this Bill would really proceed into debate in Committee of the Whole or into . . . certainly to even be passed in this Assembly.

I know that a number of the members on this side of the House have received calls with regards to the Bill and wanted the opportunity to speak to it.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at it, even in this Bill, there are aspects to this Bill that many people would agree with. And we also recognize the changing times that we face and the changes that are taking place in police work.

And the minister alluded to the fact that the RCMP are certainly upgrading their vehicles and RCMP members will have access to computerized data and computers in their vehicles; so that when they happen to pull over a person on the road or spot someone or want to get some information, they can key their computer and that information is available to them just at the push of a button, rather than having to go back to the office and dig into their files and do some extra legwork.

And what it does, and I think the minister is right in that regard, it should give RCMP officials and local police more of an opportunity to have a visible presence on the street or on the highways — areas where people really feel and would like to believe that that visible presence is something that certainly deters criminal activity or people abusing or taking advantage of or disobeying the laws of our province.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few comments, I just wanted to bring to the attention of the Assembly that there are some concerns with this Bill. The monetary issue is certainly the major question. And we want to know how far SARM has been communicated with on this issue and what kind of agreements will actually end up in place.

I believe some of the agreements are going to be left to . . . and some of the fee structure is going to be left to regulations. That's of a concern to us because of the fact that we don't really get to debate it publicly. It's put in there, in the regulations. Those regulations can be changed unilaterally by an order in council, which means that while today agreements in principle and what's finally achieved at the end of the day may not . . . may be somewhat appealing to all of the community groups involved, when it comes to the costs, as they are moved into regulations, in two or three years down the road, smaller communities might find themselves, without their really knowing it, all of a sudden with major, major bills on their hands.

So there are some issues that need to be raised, need to be addressed, and questions that we certainly need to deal with. And therefore, in bringing this to your attention, I want to give other members of the Assembly the opportunity to certainly speak to these specific concerns that they have in regards to Bill No. 69. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree completely with the member from Moosomin and actually the member from North Battleford yesterday who spoke on this, and I think we all have the same concerns. And I think we're all being asked to do the same thing here.

We've been presented with the shell of a Bill but once again this government's up to its old tricks. We're asked to look at a Bill, judge it, send it out to people, and they're supposed to give us their response to what they think of it, with no numbers in this Bill absolutely whatsoever. I don't know how we could even consider saying this is a good Bill, a bad Bill, or whatever until we quit using that old term, regulations, that this government seems so famous for.

How can a town out there or a small town or an RM that is not being asked to pay for policing up to this point take a look at this Bill and say yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could live with this. I mean they haven't had a chance to even see what it's going to cost them.

I would like to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I do believe at one point the Minister of Municipal Government had the numbers. I think RMs were actually told at one point that they would be paying approximately $15 per capita. And for some reason that has been withdrawn and pulled back. And I really find it amazing that now we are asked to pass something and we don't even have all the information to do it.

Another concern I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and I realize that at the present time the provincial government pays approximately $61 million for RCMP services — it would not surprise me in the least if, when the smoke clears from all this and the regulations are brought in, that $61 million will end up being around 40 million and it will be another cut-back and another form of downloading on the smaller municipalities, small towns, villages, and RMs in Saskatchewan.

We've saw this happen before and it would be not anything surprising to me if we saw it happening again here. And I would suggest to the minister that we will be watching. We will not let her get away with this again.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know really how we can judge this Bill on its merits until we see the numbers and we get more feedback from the people that are involved; although I don't know how they give us an honest opinion on it when they also cannot see the feedback.

And I would like to go back to this old adage of bringing everything in in regulations. Democracy really does not have its best shot at things when we always want to do it after session's over, when nobody's looking, and slide these rules in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also the other thing I think that brings to light the bad timing of this is from the day that this government was elected in 1991, we've saw nothing but downloading, passing the buck, balancing the budget on the backs of rural municipalities, towns, cities, RMs.

And now on top of this, we're asked to add another 2 or 3 or 4 mills on the old scale to pay for policing, when these people out there just can't afford it after all the downloading this government has done to them.

This year alone urban municipalities have been dumped on to the tune of $17 million, rural municipalities another 12 million; now on top of that, these same municipalities have been asked to raise your mill rate once again to cover the policing costs.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this time I would like to adjourn this debate until we've had more time to get feedback from the interested parties.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 67

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 67 — The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to speak on Bill 67 today.

Mr. Speaker, presently marketing boards are considered an important component of the existing farm economy in this province. Many producers believe that when the boards work properly, they enable producers of agriculture products to have some measure of protection from the uncertainties of price in the modern agriculture and agri-food economy.

This is especially true for what the small producers say. And they say that the huge agri-business operations may think that they don't need marketing boards, but the small and medium-sized producers, for the most part, believe that they do need them.

Let's talk about farm marketing boards, Mr. Speaker, and where the NDP stands on them. We have federal farm marketing boards. The most obvious is the Canadian Wheat Board. This NDP government has cried out in a loud and piercing voice that it wants the Canadian Wheat Board to be preserved and protected.

The members of this government cried foul when the federal government allowed barley producers to vote on whether to preserve the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly on the sale of export barley and domestic malting barley. The NDP said that even discussing whether to open up the barley market to purchasers other than the Canadian Wheat Board was virtually treasonous. It was opening up the door to the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board. And they were the champions of the Canadian Wheat Board and the single-desk system for agriculture products. That's what the NDP says.

Now let's look at what the NDP does. Where the NDP holds power, as it does here in Saskatchewan, let's look at what it is doing to the agriculture products marketing board, over which it has jurisdiction. Let's look very closely, Mr. Speaker, because what we see is very revealing about the principles followed by the NDP, and the degree to which they are true to those principles.

A close look at Bill C-67 will give our farm families in this province an opportunity to see just what kind of champions of the Canadian Wheat Board the NDP would be if they ever came into power at the federal level. The news is not comforting, Mr. Speaker, for proponents of single-desk marketing.

This Bill would give to the provincial cabinet the unfettered power to dissolve all of the farm product marketing boards and commissions which exist in this province — dissolve them, discontinue them, and wipe them out without even allowing a vote by the producers who benefit from them.

We are talking about real boards and commissions here. We are talking about these organizations — and I'll list them so it's clear who we mean. We're talking about the Broiler Hatching Egg Producers' Marketing Board, the Canola Development Commission, the Chicken Marketing Board, the Commercial Egg Producers' Marketing Board, the Saskatchewan Pork International Marketing Group, the Pulse Crop Development Board, the Sheep Development Board, the Turkey Producers' Marketing Board, and the Vegetable Marketing and Development Board.

All of these organizations are to be potentially put on the chopping block. All of them are vulnerable if this Bill passes. All of them could be discontinued and wiped out and dissolved if this Bill passes. With one stroke of a pen, the provincial cabinet could decide it was no longer convenient for them or their friends to have the Turkey Producers' Marketing Board in place to serve the needs of small and medium-sized turkey producers.

And no vote will be held unless the provincial cabinet decides it wants a vote. And if a vote is held, the cabinet can decide the rules of the vote. If there is a vote, and if the producers decide to maintain the existence of their marketing board, the cabinet can simply override the vote and abolish the marketing board anyway.

Quite astounding. And just as important, Mr. Speaker, is the breach of principles. There are at least two basic principles of Saskatchewan rural life that are being sacrificed here. One principle is the basic right of Saskatchewan agriculture producers to join together to protect their interests in a cooperative manner, which this government lauds. That right will be destroyed, Mr. Speaker. It will be gone and it will have been the NDP that will have destroyed it.

(1445)

The second principle that seems to have been thrown overboard in the rule of democracy . . . is the rule of democracy. Whatever happened to democracy? Whatever happened to the principle that democracy should rule? Mr. Minister, I ask you, Mr. Minister of Agriculture, can you look Saskatchewan farmers in the eye and tell them with a straight face that you need the power to dissolve their marketing boards without giving them a vote on the subject? I don't think you can.

Why do you want this power, Mr. Minister? Who are you doing this for? And who has pushed you to do this? Who is in the background telling you that you should do this?

I don't think that it's marketing boards and I don't think it's the producers. We know because we have talked to many of them. The producers of this province say that they want to preserve their democratic right to decide for themselves whether to keep their marketing boards, amend them slightly, or wind them down. They are not willing to see the government take that power away from them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are over 2,200 members of SPI, and I can challenge the government to show me one scrap of evidence that they want their marketing board abolished

without even having the right to vote on the question.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore move that debate on this motion be adjourned. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — My apologies, I'm sorry, but the member has adjourned debate on this motion once and cannot adjourn debate again.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raised a great number of points and a great number of issues surrounding this Bill. And we are certainly very interested in looking into the ramifications of what this Bill has and the Draconian measures that could be taken in regard to the impact on orderly marketing in this province and in this country.

Mr. Speaker, orderly marketing has been a cornerstone of many industries for a number of years in this province and across this country. And we are very concerned that the amendments in this Bill can potentially change that overnight.

We have many people that have approached us to talk about this issue, and we want to very much look into it further. And at this time I would like to adjourn debate.

Motion negatived.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I was a very young man — which seems like a long time ago — one of the things that, one of the things I did in the past life was to be involved with the poultry industry. I still am, in a different form, but one of the very first remembrances I had of my father-in-law's family was meeting my father-in-law, who was a small poultry producer in the Kelvington area. And, Mr. Speaker, he started in the industry, as many people did 30 years or so ago in the poultry industry, and attempted, attempted to build an industry and to build a business for himself in this province.

And many things that happened at that time were very disturbing, Mr. Speaker. Because what had happened is that people would come in and out of a commodity in a very haphazard way and many times producers who were trying to make a commitment to this type of an industry were being forced into a very disruptive and a very insecure way of dealing with their industry.

Mr. Speaker, I remember on one of the very first occasions that I had to speak to my father-in-law about the agriculture business — and I had a lot to learn about it because I grew up in a town — he told me about all the work he and fellow farmers and colleagues had done at that time in terms of organizing themselves and trying to organize and petition government — and I might add, an NDP government of the day — to allow them to have the authority to organize themselves into orderly marketing boards, marketing agencies. And, Mr. Speaker, I remember all the trips and all the meetings and all the work that went into it by people like my father-in-law, who put in a lot of work to make sure that this was going to happen.

And, Mr. Speaker, it did happen. It happened under legislation that was introduced a great many years ago, that allowed producers to organize themselves into orderly marketing. And it was legislation that was proposed to an NDP government, who was passed by an NDP government, and a government who said they stood for those principles of the producers having the right to come together in an orderly marketing system. Mr. Speaker, I thought that that was an important, an important principle that happened.

And over the years, Mr. Speaker, there have been accusations that orderly marketing and marketing boards contributed to higher priced commodities. Mr. Speaker, I remember in 1972 when I was involved with that, the Safeway flyer would say: whole fryers, 99 cents a pound. Mr. Speaker, I'd be willing to bet that right now you could see features advertised in the city of Regina at the present time that'll advertise whole fryer chickens for 99 cents a pound.

And, Mr. Speaker, everybody in this House except perhaps a few Regina members, who don't understand what it means to have the input costs go up so dramatically over the years, would understand how efficient that the industry has worked and how much good value that there actually has been contributed to the agriculture industry by the orderly marketing system.

Mr. Speaker, we in Canada are very fortunate and very blessed in so far as we have the opportunity to have the highest quality food at a regular inspected way for people in our province at very affordable prices.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I guess the problem that I have with this legislation is the inconsistency of the principles of this government. Mr. Speaker, people have counted on the principle of orderly marketing over the years and all of a sudden this government is in a hurry to get rid of it.

Mr. Speaker, we need to understand why that is so. We need to be concerned about what is in the interest of all of a sudden moving into that direction. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we have concerns. We want to know the real answer of why people like my father-in-law years ago and all the work that they've done over the years to have an orderly marketing program, should still be able to look forward to that and still be consulted, still understand why it's necessary for this to change.

Farmers and agriculture people are reasonable people, Mr. Speaker. If it's indeed true that there's good reasons why this should change, that the orderly marketing system that's in place now should change because of pressures in the international world, pressures that need to be considered, and to changing commodities and value added processing, let's have that on the table and let's understand what those changes should be and let's engage the people of this province, the producers, in that discussion.

And I am confident that just as 30 years ago when my father-in-law travelled around this province talking to

agriculture producers, that they could see the need for orderly marketing at that time, if this government is so sure that they're right in this venture, why not talk to the producers and have them understand why it's important that this change happens now, Mr. Speaker. Because I'm convinced that if they took the time to consult and to talk to producers, you would find that they would be willing to understand the rationale behind this, Mr. Speaker.

And that's a concern that I have about it, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned that what's happening is, that we're not having the full discussion with the people involved in the agriculture community about why these changes should be made. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm concerned about this legislation.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I stand here and sit here today in amazement at the government opposite trying to move along a Bill that our colleagues have pointed out will affect so many Saskatchewan producers.

Not longer than 10 minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy House Leader and the Minister of Agriculture came across the floor to ask us our intentions of this Bill. We said that we would speak to it; we'd like to adjourn it for another day.

The minister said, well fine. He says, I would like to move closure of this Bill but I want to make a few comments. And if you'd like to adjourn it again today, you go ahead and I'll make my comments Friday next.

Well all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, with the Premier in attendance in the House, they want to ram the Bill. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back and quote from an article in *Hansard* from April 24. A statement, Mr. Speaker, made by the Premier of this province in a self-righteous manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier was speaking about federal legislation being passed and he says, and I quote: "But what we do not support is ramming and jamming the legislation through . . ." And now, Mr. Speaker, today we see the Premier of this province ramming and jamming legislation through that will affect many of our producers.

That's the reason that we think we need to adjourn this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I move adjournment of this Bill.

Motion negatived.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into this debate. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into this debate because I have been listening to the one or two Liberal speakers opposite on this issue, and to put it bluntly, I think anybody who listens to them has to come to the conclusion that there is high confusion as to what the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan stands for with respect to this particular Bill — high confusion.

On the one hand, the words last stated by the member from Arm River was that they want to speak on this Bill and delay it for a certain period of time so that there can be consultation with the public at large. Note, no opposition to the Bill in principle; note, no support for the Bill in principle, at least not from him, but from further consultation.

On the other hand, the previous speaker — the member from Melfort who spoke before the member from Arm River — got up and talked about the history of the marketing boards, particularly from his experience in the chicken and poultry industry. And he did not say that he was either for this Bill or against this Bill. What he said that he was against was the lack of provision in this Bill for a vote.

The lack of a provision for the producers to have some say about when and how a marketing agency or a marketing board might be changed in its mandate and its directions. That's his position. And he nods his head, as I'm speaking, in approval.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a debate in second reading on the principle of the Bill. A debate on the principle of the Bill means you are either for the principle of what the Bill does or you're against it. And if you're against it, you're against it with reasons and cause. And if you're for it, you're for it with reasons and cause. What you are not is sort of in the current position of the Liberal Party, which is I don't know if I'm for the Bill in principle or against the Bill in principle. I want to consult. I want to perhaps consider the question of whether or not there should be a vote amongst the producers.

On that last issue, for example, that is a matter which can be introduced in Committee of the Whole, clause by clause, by way of a specific amendment introduced by the Liberal Party. And I so invite them to do that. And as the member from Melfort shakes his head that he's going to do it, good enough — that's how the democratic process works. Let him go ahead and do that, and we can debate the merits of it.

But you cannot allow, I say with the greatest deal of respect, to have a debate in second reading of the kind of shallowness that the Liberals opposite are advocating on this particular issue. And doing so after they make their points of view of either further consultation or a need for further vote, and then adjourning the debate with only their point of view being articulated, and nobody else having a chance to respond. And nobody else having a chance to respond.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province and the farmers and the producers and the Liberals opposite ought to know exactly what's going on here. This Bill which is being introduced by the government, approximates, roughly parallels, if not indeed is exactly identical to — but I won't go that far — in its principle to the provisions that existed in this Legislative Assembly, in this legislature, prior to 1990, which, as the minister indicated in the introduction of the Bill in second reading, had been removed by inadvertence.

(1500)

It is a provision which does not come from Mars and falls only on the province of Saskatchewan. It's a provision which roughly is approximated in its principle and in its intent in all of

the other relevant provinces across Canada. It is a Bill which is intended to work with the producers in the key production areas to make the necessary changes in order to meet the challenges of the world and the global economy, of which the member from Melfort should be the leading acknowledger thereof and the leading exponent of the need for change.

He is involved in a business or businesses in Melfort of what he knows he talks of — I respect his opinion in this regard — and what he knows for sure is true about what I say. The need for this provincial government, like every provincial authority, to make sure that we've got into place an orderly system for marketing, but one which is responsive for the 1990s and the 21st century; one which makes his business viable on an ongoing business, which allows our farmers to get into production and to match the competition — whether it's down there from Tyson Foods in Arkansas, or whether it's from large-scale hog production and pig production in any other area at all. That is what the objective of this particular Bill is. That is the principle of the Bill.

Now it doesn't take a rocket engineer to figure out you're either for that principle, and you're going to be building for the 21st century, or you're against this principle, and you're not going to be building for the 21st century.

It's not a question of being for the Canadian Wheat Board or against the Canadian Wheat Board. It's not even an issue of saying whether or not the New Democratic Party says on the one hand it's for the Canadian Wheat Board but by introducing this Bill it's against the question of orderly marketing. It is not.

It is a question of adjusting the structures in cooperation with the producers involved in order to make the most sensitive, most efficient, most first-class, world-scale operation for agriculture available for the farmers of this province including the end-produce . . . users of their product like you, sir, in Melfort.

An Hon. Member: — You got our votes for it too.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And the Conservatives say, you've got the support in this operation. And I appreciate that because there are many things that we disagree on, but this is one which is a basic reality.

This is a Liberal situation. And the former leader of the Liberal opposition says that the Tory leader supported the budget, and he did that too. Unlike you, who voted against the 2 per cent cuts in the sales tax; unlike you, who voted against the $57 million increase for health care; unlike you, who voted against the increase on K to 12; unlike the hon. member from Saltcoats, who voted against the $2.5 billion in Highways, all the while getting up and advocating for more.

You doggone right — some members of this House, regardless of ideology, can put that ideology aside and do what's right for the province of Saskatchewan. And if the official opposition would once, once, just once in the life of this parliament understand that principle — and apparently it doesn't do so in the course of this debate — it would at least get this principle accepted and maybe gain some credibility in the public at large. But it refuses to do so. It refuses to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the facts in this debate. This is the situation with respect to this debate, and this is all well-known. It doesn't take, as they say, a rocket engineer to figure out the consequences of it all. You can drag on the Bill to this Friday. You can drag it on to next Friday, the next Friday after that, the next Friday, and go for as long as you want. But you know full well what you have to do to help out the producers, the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, and that is to enact this Bill.

It may very well be that we need to make some amendments in Committee of the Whole. That's no argument why we can't approve it in principle and move it to Committee of the Whole. But your arguments are no arguments for doing what you're doing — namely, one after the other, without cause or reason, adjourning.

That's not a responsible way, if I may say so with the greatest respect, in which to conduct oneself in this Legislative Assembly as an elected, responsible member of the House. Nor is it a substantive way in which to work.

An Hon. Member: — Check your record when you were in opposition.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: — Check your record when you were in opposition.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You check . . . The member from Melfort says, check my record in opposition. I invite the hon. member to check my record in opposition.

And I invite something else. If the hon. member from Melfort has as many years in this Legislative Assembly with the record that I have of service in the province of Saskatchewan, he too will be entitled to say that with some degree of creditability. I doubt that he will be able to have that because come the next provincial election, he and almost every one of the Liberals opposite will be defeated because of this kind of position that you take on this Bill. You will be defeated . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me?

This is not the question of adjourning the debate. This is not an issue of adjourning the debate. The issue is the question of whether or not you adjourn the debate after mounting an argument of substance for adjournment. And secondly, mounting . . . at least giving the opposition a chance to respond to your arguments, going back to your side to adjourn the debate.

You just simply can't get up in this legislature and say, here are all the arguments — such as they are; I've already put my minimalist view on them — and I'm not going to give anybody on the government side or anybody else who wants to speak on this Bill a chance to speak on it. I'm just going to adjourn it just like that.

Well I'm sorry, it just doesn't work that way in this democracy — just does not work this way. So I say to the Liberals opposite, you take a look at the history. You take a look at the substance of what this Bill tries to do. You ask your constituents how you should be voting on this Bill. You want time to consult with your constituencies? We'll give you the time to consult with your constituencies, Mr. Speaker, but make sure you consult with them in fact and in substance and in all honesty.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce her official.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me today Jim Brickwell, senior policy analyst, Municipal Government.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — Welcome to Madam Minister and her official this afternoon.

I have already spoken on this and some of the other development Authority Acts and I have I think made it clear that my position is that — and on behalf of the opposition that — while we begrudge nothing for the river valley authorities that we have in this province, I am concerned that the river valley authorities that were set up in the '70s get funding from the provincial government on an annual basis for now, something in the order of 20 years, while the communities that were not put on that list 20 years ago, can't get on that list.

And so the question I have for Madam Minister is, can something not be done to equalize it so that, say Prince Albert and North Battleford, that also have river valleys . . . we weren't on the list 20 years ago, consequently we can't get on a list now; our residents are in fact paying taxes to support the river valley authorities in Saskatoon and Regina and Swift Current and Moose Jaw.

And I say I'm not condemning that, I'm just saying that there seems to be an inequity here, an inequity that was set back in the '70s under the Blakeney administration. It's never been corrected since. Could something be done so that all cities with river valleys that want to start authorities can start them?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As the member knows, we've gone through a rather difficult several years trying to live within the means of what the provincial revenues produce and what we can afford to accomplish with that. And certainly the matters you raise are matters that members on our side of the House have raised as well, who care about the parks and care about their development.

I think initially these were meant to be centre-pieces for the province, located in areas where there was larger population centres and what not, and over the years we haven't had the ability to even fully meet our funding needs for these established parks. But certainly into the future, the kinds of questions you raise would be part of the regular budget process, and like I say, there are certainly advocates who would like us to take another look at the urban parks question.

We're pleased, this budget, to be able to restore funding to the general park system in the province; so hopefully there'll be the resources to be able to move along to have the discussion you're talking about in the future.

Mr. Hillson: — I'd like to thank Madam Minister for that answer. But I would like to carry on for a moment, if I may, and say that while there are financial constraints I think we all in this province understand, nonetheless does it still not seem fair that even within those constraints, if it's say 2 million or 1 million that is going to be devoted to urban river valley authorities, that each community in the province should have an equal chance of getting a share of those funds, rather than year after year after year now for 20 or 25 years, the same cities get that pool of funding, the same cities do not get that pool of funding?

And so I say I understand what the minister is saying, that there's only so much money to go around, but why does it always have to go around to the same communities and why are other communities shut out year after year? Couldn't we even within these financial constraints introduce a bit of equity into the system?

(1515)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I can only respond that once you've established a certain level of infrastructure you have to pay attention to whether you can sustain the infrastructure you've already developed. So to add new projects means that you're setting up a continuing expectation for maintenance of a new set of infrastructure. And we've had a great deal of difficulty maintaining the infrastructure that was already established.

In this current year we're undertaking a review process to rethink whether there's a different way to look at the Authority and a different way to resource it and perhaps some of the things that you're suggesting. We may find a different way to bring other resources into the Authority without always drawing from the general revenue well. But this is . . . the Wascana Centre Authority in particular is an award-winning park innovation that brought together the resources of three partners in the city of Regina to create a park that could be a real heritage piece for the province. It's well used by a large population group. It's a centre of tourism for the province, being in the capital city. And it also houses the grounds for the Legislative Building and other important activities within the capital.

So again, there's no reason that you would not look at those things in the future. And we're certainly doing a self-evaluation right now at the Authority because at this point we're having a hard trouble maintaining the infrastructure that was established in the '70s.

So we need to address, first of all, what we'd do with our existing infrastructure before we start adding to it.

Mr. Hillson: — I accept those answers from the minister for now, but . . . And I also accept her assurances that in forward planning we will try and devise policies whereby other cities in the province can share in these advances. And I hope that the day may not be far off where communities like Nipawin and Prince Albert and North Battleford may also share.

For now, I accept that. As I say, I do not begrudge the cities that are receiving funding at present for their river valley authorities, but I look forward to further developments and greater equity in the system in the future. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 44 — The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1997

The Deputy Chair: — We have the same official, and welcome the new minister.

Clause 1

Mr. Hillson: — I guess I could repeat my points, but I won't. Again though, I don't begrudge Moose Jaw what they have done to develop their river valley. I congratulate them for it. But I just find it unfortunate that, say taxpayers in my home community, have had . . . financed that in part for many, many years, and we also have a river valley that could use some work. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 40 — The Residential Services Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we'll be assisted in our deliberations this afternoon by Mr. Jim Browne, who is the director of vocational services in the community living division of the Department of Social Services.

Clause 1

Ms. Julé: — I thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Chair. And I welcome the minister and welcome to Mr. Jim Browne. And, Mr. Minister, I have a few questions regarding this Bill. I notice that this Bill will help reduce spending at the government level. But will it also reduce spending . . . (inaudible) . . . approval of cabinet?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, absolutely not, Mr. Chair. The matter of funding to our community-based services, residential services, is a matter of budget debate, both in the preparation of the provincial budget within government, cabinet level and then at the caucus level, and then of course it's a matter of debate in the legislature and all those processes of accountability are there, including the Treasury Board process which is within government. This is simply a matter of expediting the payments so that the community-based organizations have a much simpler life, in our view.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I noticed in one clause, and I'm sorry I don't have the reference to it right here, but I noticed that you've changed the wording from "provide . . . financial assistance to"; and you changed that to "enter into agreements with" people, organizations, etc. And I'm wondering does this mean that Social Services will be contracting out some of its services?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, no, Mr. Chair. These services in essence are contracted services now, where we will contract with a society or a community-based organization to provide the services. This just establishes then the contractual framework by way of legislation to enable the payments to be made that we don't, we don't . . . aren't required to do what we've been doing for some years now, which is the order in council process.

So it's not a new . . . it's not any change in real life. The community-based services will continue to be providing the service. We will continue to fund them to provide that service.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm just wondering in regard to your statement, who will be accountable then for how that money is being spent? I would like to be reassured that there is some accountability going back to the minister and the government of the day from the organizations, and I think it's absolutely essential that there is, there is some level of accountability. And I ask you if you can give me that assurance.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chair. I mean there's all sorts of accountability.

And I don't know if the member is suggesting that some of our community-based organizations are not accountable with how they're providing, for instance, the group home services. They are 100 per cent accountable. There's officials from the department that work with them, that are in contact with them. There's never been, in my mind or my view, an issue raised where these community-based organizations providing these group home kinds of services are not extremely accountable both to the public, their own communities, their own boards,

and ultimately to the funder, which is the department.

Of course that accountability comes right from relationships with regional offices of our department; it comes through the establishment of the contracts; it comes through ultimately to this legislature. And if any member of the legislature felt that there was a funded agency being funded by public money that was not utilizing those funds in the proper way, it would be our responsibility, as the elected member, to raise those questions.

So there is, in my view, a very high level of accountability in our community-based organizations.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I didn't ask the question because I believe that the organizations out there are not accountable; I just want to assure that everything will remain as such.

Now, Mr. Minister, the Bill makes it possible for Social Services to enter into agreements with bodies inside and outside Saskatchewan. Why isn't the department keeping the funding in Saskatchewan? What is the intent of this?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we very often have contracted, for instance, with the Salvation Army. Salvation Army, as an example, in my home community of Moose Jaw, provides the trusteeship services. We often contract with the Salvation Army because the Salvation Army is a national, a national entity. Then our contract, theoretically, is with an agency which is outside of the province. That's just one example; there would be others.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe that's all the questions I have regarding this Act. And I thank you and your official for answering these questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, just before I move the committee report the Bill, I'd like to give thanks to Mr. Jim Browne, not only for his assistance here today but for all the good work that he and others in his division of our department are doing on a daily basis.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we are being joined now by Mr. Phil Walsh, who is executive director of the income security division of the Department of Social Services, immediately to my right. Just behind Mr. Walsh is Leanne Lang, from the Department of Justice. And directly behind me, Mr. Bill Duncan, who is our director in the Department of Social Services of financial services.

Clause 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and again welcome to your officials.

Mr. Minister, I'm just wondering, how did the department arrive at the increase to the Family Income Plan payments? And what I mean . . . Or in regards to that, how was it decided that an overall $3.3 million increase was adequate?

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, there'd be a number of factors in that particular decision. And I do want to say, while the Act before us is some of the legislative amendment that is making it possible for us to do the transition to the national child benefit, this is not the Act which really determines the exact financing of any given plan. But I think it's appropriate that we can talk about some of the money involved.

In this budget year we have, as the member indicated, dedicated some new monies to the Family Income Plan, which we see as a means by which we can begin to make the transition from our current situation towards the implementation of the Saskatchewan and national child benefit.

The member raises the question: how is it determined that the $3.3 million of new resources being added this year is appropriate or adequate? Let me say on the adequacy side, I don't believe it is. We've not yet reached the adequate levels that we hope to achieve — target — but it's a movement forward. And that'll be based on, sort of, the resources that are available to us to work with and how we can dedicate them, and we felt that this is one of the best places that we could dedicate what new resources we have.

We tried to do this in a fashion that we will not be contradicting any change that will be coming along as a result of our cooperation and initiatives with the federal government towards the national benefit.

So that's our goal with these new monies. It's sort of the money that we had available that we thought we could target to this purpose. It's intended to move us along the way towards the national benefit, and the same thing we're doing with this legislation. It's putting our legislative house in order that we can then quickly move into the national benefit.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, will the department or the minister have any tools or methods to evaluate whether the increased payments under the Family Income Plan are sufficient?

And I ask that question because I know that there are numbers that you have right now of people that would be receiving this, but I also anticipate that with some of the training coming up and so on, that there — and people may be, hopefully, getting into the workforce — that there will be more. So I'm just wondering what methods you have used to evaluate whether this amount of money and the increased payments is sufficient.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well again, Mr. Chair, the question of sufficiency is a very debatable issue. And I'm of the view that

we won't have a sufficient program until, in cooperation with our federal counterparts, we see the road-map to take us to at least a $2.2 billion contribution from Ottawa. Then I believe we might start looking at some descriptions of sufficiency. We're not to sufficiency; we're on a movement towards that, I'm hoping.

We will be monitoring of course the take-up on the Family Income Plan. Like the member points out, that we are seeing some growth in employment which means more people coming into the workforce that might be eligible for the benefits. We're seeing changes in training programs, hopefully to get people into an independent circumstance where the Family Income Plan might be more applicable to their situation.

What we've done is utilized our best, our best knowledge of past experience with the Family Income Plan; the best sort of estimations that the officials in the department can make, and they have a broad depth of resource and background information to work from. And the numbers that we've looked at, as we expect to be benefiting under the plan, are the best estimates that we can give with all that background information.

We'll be tracking of course very carefully over the next period of months to see . . . just to see how it is affecting income of families in our province.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to refer you to section 3 that was repealed. This Bill eliminates the position of the director of income security, who administered all income security programs, and now several different people will administer income security programs — I understand the unit administrators, the program managers and third parties.

It would seem that having one person to administer the programs instead of three would mean that the person . . . that person could be held accountable for how things are done. So I ask you, what is the purpose of eliminating that position?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, what we're trying to do in fact is two things: one of them is to in fact improve accountability; and two, bring the decision making and the service as close to the client as we possibly can.

And so what in essence has happened, we've moved that important role of decision making to our unit managers, i.e., into the regions. So it's as close to the client as is possible.

But then to ensure the accountability, we have now made our regional managers directly responsible to the deputy minister of Social Services. And so that accountability now is directly to the most senior official in the department.

So it's two things — to that layer of accountability right to the deputy, but equally to move the decision-making choices closer to the client.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If I could refer you now to section 10 that was repealed. This Bill removes the social assistance levy from municipalities. And I'd like to know how much money for social assistance came from municipalities before this?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps I can suggest to the member while we're getting that, the specific . . . we're going to have the information here in a matter of seconds. Someone had to leave the room to get the precise number. If she wants to move on to another question we could do that, and then we'll get that number here in a matter of seconds.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and we will do that.

If you could move to section 14 please, amended. I note that this Bill also makes provisions to set up appeal procedures for people who do not feel that they have been assessed fairly. Because there are already appeal procedures in place, isn't this just duplication? Can't the appeals procedure for income-tested and needs-tested programs be combined into one?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's concern here but because we are pioneering something brand-new here, in terms of the child benefit and the employment support programs, this appeal process will be quite, quite different than the appeal process that now exists for social assistance.

But because we are going to continue to have the more traditional social assistance program as well, at least for some period of time, we will maintain the appeal process for social assistance, which as you will know, involves community members — not people from the department but members of the community — again on a regional basis so that they can be close to the clientele.

This new appeal process will be for the much simplified children's benefit. It will in essence consist of one person at a central point. So that we do have that process of appeal so that someone can appeal, but because the new system will be so much simpler we believe it can be handled by one person in one office. But we want to maintain the appeal process but at the same time, in the more traditional social service delivery, to maintain the appeal process for that group of clientele.

The Deputy Chair: — Order. There is a . . . Order. There is a conversation taking place in the Assembly that is a joyous conversation, but I just want to suggest to those members engaged that it is somewhat disruptive at times. The noise level simply gets a little bit high and I ask you to keep the volume down a little bit.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, an appointed adjudicator will hear the appeals. I would like to know whether or not you have set some criteria whereby you as minister will choose those adjudicators.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The answer, Mr. Chair, is no, we've not worked out that detail yet. And recall that we're looking towards, our hope would be an implementation date perhaps by the end of this year. It's been indicated to us by the federal minister that implementation is July '98. I'm hoping at least we could compromise somewhere in between — between the two.

But over the course of the summer and early fall, it's this kind of detail we need to work through.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, will you be using past criteria that you have used for selecting staff and so on in the same way that you will be . . . will you be using that in the same way for adjudicators? I'd like to know how the adjudicators will be chosen as such. Will they be members — or not members, excuse me — will they be staff that presently exist or will there be an invitation for these positions from outside of the existing staff?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps just to reflect on the current circumstance of our appeal boards, those are individuals drawn from the community. We will invite a variety of sources within the community to suggest names that might be appropriate for appeal board members. On occasion I've consulted with some members of the legislature on all sides of the House around appropriate names of people from the community that might serve on an appeal board.

Because here we're, in essence, finding one person for the province, I'm sure there would be some consultation, perhaps with agencies in the community; it might be a consultation we have within the confines of this legislature.

Will want to be someone for sure who everyone can have a high degree of confidence in, that someone that has expertise and perhaps some mediation kind of skills and abilities. But it for sure will want to be someone that everyone can look at and say, there is a fair individual who will fairly adjudicate disputes.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you anticipate about how many adjudicators there will be in the province?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, because of the, sort of, the simplicity of the administration of the benefit, we're expecting at this point that we will name one. Now if it's shown that the one is not sufficient, then we would look at perhaps expanding that. But we're going to start trying to find one person who can do this central adjudication.

It's just not going to be anything like the current circumstance of appeals and the complicated process by which individuals access Social Services, defining their needs and balancing the needs with the resources and so on. This will be a process . . . income tested, family income tested, very responsive to any change in monthly income. And so it's a much . . . it's an income-based kind of a program, and we think will be relatively free of complication, therefore relatively free of dispute.

But knowing that in any program there may be some room for dispute and there may be some room for error on our behalf and so on, that we do want to have a process in place. But we think right now that a single person, a single office, can deal with it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, have you been able to sort of determine how much money there will be put aside to administer the appeals process, and to pay the adjudicator?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Madam Chair, there will be perhaps two . . . or, Mr. Chair, there may be perhaps two levels of expense here. One will be some administrative expense for that process. And I expect we'd absorb that right within the department; that that'll be provided by existing staff and resources in the department.

Our current appeal board members that serve in the regions are compensated on a per diem basis. They would meet for a day and may hear a whole number of appeals in the course of the day, so we compensate on a per diem basis. It's not yet been determined if that's going to be the appropriate way to handle this more central appeal officer or not, but I expect something like that. This will not present a large or even a very significant budgetary expenditure.

(1545)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Minister. Is there an evaluation planned for the future to assess the new income-tested assistance plans?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — This will be and has been I think already, Mr. Chair, the subject of some discussion. But again it's going to have to be a process that we work out on the national, on the federal-provincial basis. Because we're talking now about a national program — not a federal program, not a provincial program, but a national program — that involves both the federal government, provincial governments, territorial governments.

And so as we work through all of the steps towards the implementation of the national program there has already been some discussion I know, among officials about building in some evaluation tools and accountability tools and so on, as we go. But it's not something that we can just determine alone. It will have to be done in conjunction with the other provinces, territories, and the feds.

Ms. Julé: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. And I do thank your officials and I would bid them a fine afternoon.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the minister: I note from this that we're bumping the amount for income supplement from 105 to 120. And I recognize the member from Humboldt has asked some questions. What's the criteria that you base this on? And is there a family income level that comes into effect before a supplement is paid out? Do social services recipients receive this as well? Is this a top-up of the social assistance program that's out there?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, before I forget, I want to return to the member from Humboldt to give the response to the question that she asked earlier this afternoon in terms of the social service levy and the total amount. Last year the total amount was $3 million.

Now to the member from Moosomin's question around the

Family Income Plan: it is not intended to be a top-up to social service. It is intended to be an income support for families who have some income — usually through work — but income that perhaps through their work is not adequate to meet the needs of the family.

Now it can be available to social assistance recipients who may be receiving some benefits, and in combination with those benefits or work benefits still can get the benefit of the Family Income Plan. But it is to assist those families who for the most part are working poor, working poor. One, to keep them from sliding into the need for social assistance and hopefully to provide them benefits that can help them grow in their own experience, in their own lifestyle, and so on. What our changes this year try to do, because in some ways we're focusing — not in some ways, we are focusing the building, the benefits, on children, it's dedicated to families with children.

And so we want this to be a step forward towards the national child benefit, which will then hopefully, when complete and fully resourced, will be able to provide for all of the basic living needs of a child in our province, not through welfare but through a national child benefit. That's where we're trying to head.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, what you're basically saying then is Social Services has, let's say for a family of five — there's a couple of parents and three children — Social Services has a level of support. I'm guessing that it's in that $1,100 range. I'm not sure; it depends on housing and what have you, but I'm guessing it's there.

So what you're basically saying is if a family income should be at that or close to that level, they probably wouldn't then qualify for the supplement? At what level does the supplement kick in at? Is it a wage of five sixty, about $800 a month, or is there a specific level that it kicks in at?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, if your income is 850 a month, you would receive the maximum benefit under the Family Income Plan. As your income then rises . . . and it's dependent too on the number of children that you have, but at 850 you would get the maximum benefit per child, given the number of children in your family. Then the benefit begins to decrease as your income rises.

What is significant also about the change though is that with the benefit now we will be providing for children in these families the full supplementary health coverage that they now would receive as welfare, and that full supplementary health coverage carries right on through. Even as your financial benefit may shrink with your growing income, the health benefit will carry right through until you've reached that income stage where you're no longer eligible.

So we think this is the key component to assisting families of low income circumstance — of not getting into the welfare system just to have to get the health benefit.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, when do you anticipate this program will get off the ground? As soon as the Bill is declared and it will be . . . or are you looking it's going to be July 1 start-up date? Or when do you expect that this will certainly come into force?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The Family Income Plan program and the changes which I've just been talking about came into effect on May 1. That's the initiation of the change here in the province. We're hoping that in working with the other provinces, working with the federal government, that we could get the national child benefit going as soon as possible. That's been our position — as soon as possible. And it's not a simple thing to bring 10 provinces, territories, and the federal government into harmony on how things should flow. It's not a simple process, but we're working towards as soon as possible.

What the federal Minister of Finance has indicated is that they are targeting July 1998 for the implementation of the national benefit. Now at that point in time, if we have to wait until July '98, we're still only working on a federal government commitment of $600 million to the program. And it's been agreed I think by all — independent observers and others — that to make this truly an effective, long-range social program for Canadian children from coast to coast that we need an injection and a federal commitment of 2.2 billion.

The federal minister has indicated very clearly that the 600 million that they have dedicated now is seen by the federal government as a down payment, that this is not the end of the . . . not by any means the end of their commitment. They have described it as a down payment. We know that that down payment has to reach a commitment of 2.2 billion before we can say that the program is essentially altogether in place. But the latest then that we see a start to the program would be July 1, 1998.

We made the changes May 1 this year because we want to start moving in the direction. If we're not getting there as quickly as we can with the federal government, we believe it is important to move right now in this budget year.

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

Mr. Tchorzewski: — To ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, and members from the opposition. I want to introduce someone who I hope maybe someday might even be a future member of this Legislative Assembly. And we all introduce very special people to ourselves. Today I'm really happy to introduce two very special people to me, my daughter Sharla, who came to visit the Legislative Assembly, and her daughter and my granddaughter — and it's quite coincidental I might say — whose name is Alexa. She's speaking to the House.

So members please join me in extending Sharla and Alexa a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 58
(continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, I would have to add that her good looks — I'm not sure where they actually came from. But we certainly welcome her here.

Mr. Minister, coming back to this debate on the question here. You're saying, as of May 1, $120 per child is available. How does a family apply for this income?

And the other thing I would like to add, Mr. Minister, is you're talking about a federal injection into it. Are you talking of when the federal government injects funds into it that they will then top this up to another level? Or are they just going to pick up and you'll just back away from part of the funds? You'll only fund like, say 50 per cent of it and they'll fund 50 per cent. Is that how I perceive the program working when the federal government comes in?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — On the member's first question around the Family Income Plan, it changes on May 1. I hope that he has received, I hope every MLA in the House has received information about the program. If you haven't, we're going to get it to you like immediately. But all of that information is now in all of our regional offices.

We've taken what's not typical actually in the Department of Social Services, but because of what we believe is the importance of this and the real difference it can make in some people's lives, we've taken a step we don't often take. We've taken out a limited number of newspaper adverts to acquaint the public with the program and have printed a number of the brochures and posters that are now being distributed and displayed around the province.

Each and anyone who may be interested could just phone their regional office of Social Services and the application . . . It's quite a simple application. It's not near the kind of application that's called on when you're applying for social assistance. It's quite a bit clearer; it's a declaration of income and so on.

And I'm hopeful that your office will have received it and I know how that works — may be in Moosomin and here in Regina and so on.

On the question of the federal contributions to the national benefit, it is a national program and so we are cooperating to craft this one program. We'll each be putting resources to the program.

But this province and all provinces, to my understanding, have made the commitment now to the federal government, that when new monies are made available by Ottawa for the purposes of addressing children and families of low income circumstance and children and families in need, that we make the commitment to them that any monies then that will be freed up as a result of that would be redirected within the province to programs and issues that touch low income families and children. And I know that our federal counterparts will be very, very anxious to monitor and to ensure that this happens coast to coast. And on this I support them 100 per cent.

We are hoping here to craft a national social program, one that Canadians, no matter where you live, can benefit from. And if it's going to have a national component, it needs that federal oversight to make sure that all of we provincial jurisdictions are moving on a similar track.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you and I have had discussions — your former minister as well — have had some discussions as far as some kind of income for low income families, families who are individuals who choose to take a job rather than going to social assistance, but as a result of taking it find themselves with a greatly reduced income. And we've talked about the idea of a supplement. Now this supplement basically targets children, as I understand it.

But let's say a family finds it's just part-time income and they're at $500. This still doesn't bring them quite up to the point of where they may be if they went to Social Services, say a family of two parents and three children. Are you looking at maybe some other programs down the road or is this part of that additional programing that might be available as the federal government comes on stream with their funding of this supplement?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, with ideas like that there would be room in the department for the member if he wants a position. This is exactly what we're trying to do, exactly what we're trying to craft. We've started, I think importantly, with children. We've started, importantly, with children because we know that the more that we can do for children immediately, the significant long-run benefits are for us all.

But when we . . . And this legislation, this is dead on to the discussion about this legislation, because what this legislation is doing is giving us the framework to do some of these options that don't currently exist under the current legislation. And when those resources start moving from Ottawa to support the child benefit thereby freeing up some of our resources, this is exactly where we want some of those resources to go.

We've described it in our discussion paper as a program of employment and maintenance supplements. So that in fact we can support those families to make sure that it remains more advantageous financially to be supported outside of the welfare or the social assistance program than it is within.

(1600)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and as I've indicated before, I think we need to certainly work at programs that really give people the . . . and allow them the initiative to accept whatever job may be available and to work with them to help them to at least create a level of income that certainly will help sustain their family.

One further question, Mr. Minister, and this is a concern I have. In view of the fact we do hear on a number of occasions with the expansion of gambling, the VLTs that are available throughout the province, the access to some of the gambling programs, and then one thing that really concerns me is two weeks ago that program CBC did on child prostitution and talking to children, and some of the comments were made about the fact they needed more money to actually put food on the table.

Is there . . . do you have something in place, Mr. Minister, to monitor the fact that while you're targeting and this supplement is going to be made available on the basis of children, is there something in the program to indeed make sure that the money goes to the utilization of providing for children rather than being taken and abused by the parents and maybe used to cover such as a gambling habit or another habit they may have?

I think we all agree that we want to provide and make sure our children are getting the benefits. And that's one of the concerns I would have at the end of the day, is that indeed we are addressing this and that those monies indeed go toward . . . where you're aiming or the intent of the legislation. So, Mr. Minister, maybe you could respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think we're all sensitive to that desire, that where we have resources, we want the resources to be going to where the need is. And if we have resources dedicated to children, we want to be sure that the children are benefiting from those resources. I guess we will never, ever discover the perfect mechanism to guard against all human foibles. I don't think we'll ever do that.

In the current circumstance of individuals, for instance, who will be receiving social assistance in our province — and it's demonstrated to us that some of the benefits may not be reaching the children as we would hope they would, in that circumstance those families very likely will be put into a trustee situation.

And I spoke earlier to the member from Humboldt about the Salvation Army serving that role in some of our communities. And so the benefits then are provided to a trustee; in the Moose Jaw example it would be a Salvation Army trustee. That person then works with that family to ensure that the monies go to provide the benefit. There is never a perfect solution.

I do want to say though that — this is maybe a little off subject — but earlier today I had the experience of meeting with a number of people who are involved in the Anti-Poverty Ministry here in the city of Regina. And a number of people are leaving this city to travel to Edmonton to a conference that will bring together people who are actually themselves living in poverty, to start discussing solutions about empowerment for themselves, looking at options of co-op job creation, and that sort of thing.

I was very pleased that we could play some small role in assisting this because so often I think we have solutions — and some of them are good; some of them maybe not so good — but very often if you really want to know the solution to a problem, you go and talk to the person who's living with the problem.

In this case, these are folks who are living in these circumstances daily. And I think they're going to come back with some very significant ideas about how their lives could be empowered, and share that with others in our community.

So there are some, I think, some very good things happening. At the same time we need constantly to be vigilant about the public money.

Mr. Toth: — Deputy Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that's important. I think the more you look at working with local groups and local agencies, that goes a long way in addressing some of these concerns. And that input is certainly positive.

I think when you look at what groups are doing . . . I'm just reminded just recently I believe, the food bank here in Regina setting up a greenhouse. I think that's excellent.

There are certainly ways and means in which people work together, and I just met with one of the . . . not a recipient, but one of the young individuals who completed the occupational health and safety program. He's part of a group of volunteer individuals going to help Manitoba residents. And I think that's just a good indication of how people can work together, even not only in their own communities but reaching out to other people who are less fortunate.

So the more we can do together, the more we can bring groups together . . . and certainly this conference, I think is positive. So I thank you for your comments, your responses, Mr. Minister, and I thank your officials for being here this afternoon.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 21 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, before reporting the Bill, I want to say again to the officials who have joined us, our thanks for their support in the deliberations of committee this afternoon.

But I particularly want to thank these officials for the work they have done in preparing this legislation, and in fact in preparing the concepts that now are reflected in this legislation — the concepts of a national child benefit.

It's very often, I think, we who are elected and are on the public platform that receive some of the credit when in fact so much of the work, so much of the creative thinking, happens in our offices within departments of government. And I want to extend my deepest thanks to the Department of Social Services in this province for its very able and creative thinking.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Deputy Chair: — Will the minister introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left is Craig Dotson, deputy minister of Education; to my right is Michael Littlewood, executive director of third party funding and legislative services.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Thank you, Madam Minister, for being present with your officials this afternoon so we can begin our first discussion of some of the clauses under Committee of the Whole.

And I understand that we are under a time restriction and indeed we'll probably spend about 15 minutes on this Bill in terms of some introduction, okay.

As I indicated before, Madam Minister, I think the clauses that we have before us regarding the structuring and restructuring of the school year, the school day, the indeed clarification of whether or not the extension of a school day was in the old Act or is in the . . . Those are things that I will not raise today because I think they are necessary and indeed we have not had the comments from stakeholders regarding any disapproval with those.

Where I would like to begin, Madam Minister, is in clause 17. And that is for review of designation, placement, or program. And I'd first like to begin by asking you, under the existing Act or the existing regulations, what process is in place to deal with that very concern by parents of students who may be designated or may not be designated. What exists currently?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The present wording in the legislation has been seen . . . has been reviewed by Justice, and it has been found to not be legally binding. And at present what parents can do, even though apparently the legislation has no power because it's not legally binding, parents can ask for a tribunal to review the school board's designation of their young person, and the tribunal's decision is binding. But as I said earlier, Justice has found this not to be legally enforceable.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, while I see the need to address the concerns of designation or non-designation, and in fact the program that is to be in place . . . And I see that by the legislation you have indicated that the board must put in place a process to ensure that these appeals can indeed be heard. Have boards reacted to this already? And are you aware of whether or not boards have in place, based on what the regulations currently say, an appeal process for program and for designation or non-designation?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The current regulations don't require a board to have a process in place, and what happens is the parent can apply to the regional director to have an inquiry set up. But as I said earlier, these procedures have been found not to be legally binding by the Department of Justice and that's why we've introduced the amendments to The Education Act.

Mr. Krawetz: — Two quick questions to that then, Madam Minister, is why did you see the need to include placement as far as an appeal process? And then secondly, who will be responsible for the costs of that appeal procedure that would be followed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We expect that boards would set the process up. This is not expected to be a quasi-judicial process. This is a reasonable process in order that parents might be able to appeal to a group of people to have the recommendation of the school board reconsidered. Now obviously it's a review panel; it is not a binding panel. The recommendations of the panel are not binding, but it does give parents a place to go when they're concerned about the recommendation of the school division.

In terms of where did this come from, I can share with you that I've had representation from parents, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, as an example, for the department, the government, to do something, given that what we thought we had in place is not legally binding.

(1615)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. My final question around that particular section I guess looks at, do you see this as a potential of precedent setting for other parents of students not in . . . not with students with disabilities or anyone who may be designated, but students of some particular other interest who suddenly say, well I would like to be able to appeal the placement of my child as well? Is there a problem that that may occur?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I think it's fair to say that the special needs students that we're talking about have a number of issues surrounding their program and placement. It has to do with integration, segregation and so on. One of the issues is, will a high school student be placed at their local high school if they are a special needs student, or will they be transferred to some other school?

And we don't expect there to be many, many, many appeals by parents. What we do think is that this will give a parent a place to go that will provide an independent look at a decision of the school board in terms of program or placement. The panel recommendations will be that — they are simply recommendations. They're not binding on the school board as the old legislation was when it came to designation.

And we think that this does not have to be an expensive process. It's not a quasi-judicial process, and it's simply a matter of allowing parents access to another process that's a bit independent, that can make recommendations, but obviously the recommendations aren't binding. Sober second thought is what I'd refer to it as.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, if I could now refer to clauses 19 and 20 of the amendment, specifically section 203

and section 204. I've stated, Madam Minister, that I believe that in . . . for the process of restructuring and amalgamations to occur we have to have all stakeholders onside to ensure a successful, a successful restructuring in the province of Saskatchewan. And you, I believe, have indicated that there are a number of projects, of such projects that will be taking place.

I know you've described in this House the situation that may occur regarding two or three or four or many more school divisions. And the question that I have I guess is, do you foresee that this could become a very troublesome kind of clause if indeed there isn't a process to bring about the negotiation of a new collective agreement for that particular entity? And I guess what I'm referring to more so is where there is a situation that no school division remains in place and indeed you're putting five or three together and there is a new structure.

As I see your amendment, the Acts will remain in place . . . the contracts, I'm sorry, will remain in place until a new contract is negotiated. Do you see this becoming cumbersome with the fact that individual new teachers will join into that, into that mix as newly employed people? There will be, I'm sure, transfers of teachers where a teacher will, from an existing school in an existing school division, may become a principal in another school, in another contract. How do you see that working and do you see that becoming troublesome?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — From that regard, it's no different than the existing provisions in the legislation. So I don't really see this as being troublesome to the extent that you're suggesting.

I think I've said it several times before that if we are to see restructuring go forward in the province — and we've agreed that in some cases restructuring does make sense — and if we are to have all of our partners in education onside, then it's the government's view that we need to ensure that teachers feel comfortable with restructuring in that they can take their existing collective agreement with them until such time as the school, the newly constituted school division, is in a position to negotiate a new collective agreement with all of the teachers that have come from a variety of school boards.

Mr. Krawetz: — With the repeal of section 204 and replacing it with something very similar to what we've just described for the situation where school divisions actually create a new entity, have your officials, in consultation with the teachers' federation and locals, looked at any other options in terms of being able to arrive at a collective agreement or indeed looking at the situation where teachers may have the choice of picking one out of three existing agreements?

Has that been something that teachers have raised with you in terms of having that ability? Or are you indicating that when we're moving a particular school from an entity that indeed that process still has to stay in place where the contract remains in force for that one school?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I think it's fair to say that we have discussed this particular section with our various partners in education. My understanding is that the teachers' federation felt most comfortable with the amendment that we're putting forward in that the belief was that teachers should not automatically lose their local agreement if a school was . . . a school division was restructured. I understand that we suggested a couple of other options but this was the option that they felt most comfortable with.

We had a similar discussion with the school trustees. The school trustees are of a different view. They were suggesting what you're suggesting — teachers should be able to pick which collective agreement they want. But given the nature of restructuring and what we're doing in Saskatchewan and all of the school divisions that are presently in the process of having the discussions about restructuring, my understanding is from the information that I've been given by school divisions, that wherever restructuring has gone forward, agreements have been made with the local teacher associations that they could keep their collective agreement until such time a new collective agreement was negotiated.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Welcome, Madam Minister, and to your officials. Last time I asked you a question about this particular issue, you spent a lot of time off the topic ranting and raving about how this was the biggest attack you'd heard on the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) since . . . in decades or in your history, which didn't answer the question. And to use a phrase that I've heard in a few other areas, was it was probably an inflammatory phrase, along with a few other things.

The first question that I have and I guess we're somewhat limited on questions today, is when was this legislation ready to go, and when was it presented to all the stakeholders, and why did we get it so late in the whole series in the House?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I think it's fair to say that the school year, school day, that discussion has been going on for some time with our various partners in education. That discussion, I believe started early last fall. The issue of the technical errors, that's been ready for some time.

In terms of some of the discussions around the collective agreement or successor rights and how we're going to vote when you have an urban-rural school division, that discussion came later on because we have a P.A. (Prince Albert), P.A. Rural, Kinistino, P.A. Comprehensive High School amalgamation which the school board has just agreed to; that they're going to go forward with a restructured school division.

And so some of the issues in this legislation comes out of that restructuring. And I think that those issues became apparent in March. So I think it's fair to say that we were still refining the legislation, dealing with some of the issues, particularly out of the restructuring in P.A. And that's why the legislation wasn't introduced until, I think at the end of April. But we were still having the discussions around restructuring in March and April.

Mr. Heppner: — After the much-touted Sask Valley success — and I think on the thing of successor rights Sask Valley has a good plan — I'm surprised that you didn't take what's happening there and happening very successfully and just use

that. I mean if something's working, why look for something else that may or may not work as well.

On some of the phone calls that I got, I had some of the individuals say, well this whole Bill, which is very much wanted by certain groups in our province, is now going to disappear and it's going to be gone for ever, and it's the opposition's fault that it's going to die and whatever. So I'm not sure who's all fearmongering out there. I have some moderately good ideas.

So I had to come up with an answer exactly what was happening, so I had three answers. And I want you to tell me which one of those is the correct one because I let the person choose. I said one of the possible answers is that you yourself didn't like this legislation. So if you bring it in late enough it may just up and die and you can blame the opposition for it. You can say I presented it, it was a great piece of legislation, all my friends like it, but I'm so sorry, I'm the good kid on the block and the bullies went ahead and axed it. That was one possibility.

The other one is that you might have thought that we were in such a rush to go fishing that we would just let this slide right on through without asking any questions. And you could say hurrah, if I'd introduced this at the start of the session they wouldn't have asked any questions and it would have just . . . it would have dragged on and on. Now that I bring it in at the end, it's just real quick and we're done with it.

The third option was that maybe you really didn't know what you were doing when this whole legislation was being put together; that's why it took so long to create it. Well as I said, Sask Valley had a good idea with their succession rights. There are a lot of good ideas out there and it just seems amazing that it takes till just the very last days of the session till this whole package is together.

Those are the three options that I presented to a number of those people who asked that question and I guess I'll let you pick behind which door you want to look.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I don't think it's the government that chooses the last days of the session. I think that we're here until all of the people in this legislature decide that it's time for the session to be over.

In terms of the legislation, it's as I explained. I can't recall precisely when the P.A. School Division, P.A. Rural, Kinistino, and the comprehensive made their formal announcement that they were going to restructure. But I do know this: that I met with the school division on several occasions to talk about some of the needed amendments to the legislation in order for this restructuring piece to go forward.

I should say that the P.A. restructuring is a more complex restructuring than Blaine Lake and Sask. Valley, which was a very . . . it was a well-done restructuring in the province. But P.A. is bringing forward a large urban school division, a rural school division, the comprehensive high school, which is owned by a number of partners, and the Kinistino School Division. There are four boards that have decided that they want to become one board. And in order to do . . . As well, it is the first time in the history of the province where we are going to have a rural-urban board.

So there are issues in this Act . . . We tend to have an Act, particularly around elections, that deals with: how do we elect people in the rural part of Saskatchewan; how do we elect people in the urban part of Saskatchewan? We had to work out those issues. That's why we see amendments in terms of the at-large and ward system in both the rural and urban area of that P.A. restructuring.

In terms of successor rights, there were issues around the restructuring, teacher issues around the restructuring, and teachers wanted to ensure that they could keep their collective agreement until a new collective agreement was negotiated.

We needed to make some amendments to the legislation in order to support restructuring in the province where school divisions want to restructure. As you know, in order for restructuring to occur, we have to have all of our partners in education on board. We have to have trustees, we have to have teachers, we have to have parents, we have to have the directors of education, and we have to have the ratepayers on board.

And in order for restructuring to go forward, the STF has some concerns about the present legislation, and that's why we brought in these amendments — in order to accommodate the several restructuring initiatives that are taking place across the province.

So I guess all I can say to you, member, is that this legislation is here because we're in the midst of restructuring. I suspect by next January we will have 10 fewer school divisions in the province because of the initiatives that are being taken by our various partners in education at the local school division levels.

Mr. Kowalsky: — To get to Bill 60, I move that we report progress.

(1630)

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

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I guess, Madam Minister, if we could begin by stating that if Bill 59 was of some concern to individuals, both teachers and trustees, Bill No. 60 is of very, very, very significant concern to those groups. And I guess I am most deeply disappointed, Madam Minister, that what I see happening is indeed bitter feelings developing between the stakeholders in this province in the field of education.

And I've stated this very, very clearly, Madam Minister, that I think in Saskatchewan we've prided ourself with the fact that there is always that collaborative, cooperative, consultative mode that takes place with stakeholders. Whether it be to

amendments to The Education Act, whether it be to curriculum, or whether it be to The Teachers' Federation Act, those are the kinds of things that I see happening.

The process that has taken place over the last week . . . and I'm not looking at what the teachers' federation is saying or doing and what the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association is saying or doing. What I am referring to is the fact that I see a very negative reaction by both groups to a Bill that seems to have some common ground, but there seems to be a lack of understanding by one group and the other as to what are the intentions of particular clauses, particular sections, and changes. And I know that you've talked about the possibility of some amendments and clarifications.

But I guess I have to begin by saying, in the consultation process or the lack of the consultation process, did you foresee that there would be such bitterness created between the two groups? And indeed the kind of reaction that you have had, that we have had, that the teachers' federation is concerned about, that the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association is concerned about, did you foresee that this could happen? And what could you have done to have stopped that kind of reaction?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well the key provisions of this Bill were first included in a similar Bill in the spring of 1993. And this year all of our partners in education were advised of the government's willingness to consider these kinds of amendments to The Teachers' Federation Act at an inter-agency retreat in Watrous on October 17, 1996.

And in attendance were SASBO (Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials), the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), the STF, LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), and the department. There were direct discussions with the SSTA and the government — or the department — during the winter. And there were further discussions with the SSTA on specific provisions and concerns in April of this year.

Now the department did not engage all of the partners in extensive joint discussions of this Bill, as it has done this year on other issues contained in The Education Act. And this is because this Bill includes contentious issues that deal with teachers in a capacity as members of the STF. And the depth of the disagreement between the SSTA and the STF indicated that these kinds of joint consultations that we've had on numerous other issues in terms of educational policy just wasn't likely, and it wasn't very constructive.

So what I can say is that I believe, in principle, that when we're developing education policy in this province that we need to have all of our partners on board in order to advance educational policy. And there needs to be full consultation with all of our partners. And this certainly has been the practice of the Department of Education before I became the minister and since I became the minister.

Now I understand the view that on this Bill that we did not engage in sufficient consultation. I understand that position. But given the depth of the disagreement, member of the opposition, between some of the partners in education on this particular Bill and given that essentially many of the issues contained in this Bill are internal to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, it was not clear to me that joint consultation would have led to further consensus. Because I think that there are issues in this Bill that fundamentally people are simply going to disagree with each other on. And we have taken the view as the government that we needed to move forward with some of the issues contained in this Bill.

Mr. Krawetz: — While I realize that we're not on Bill 59, which is The Education Act, but you've indicated that The Education Act and The Teachers' Federation Act are two Bills that you've had time to deal with in this session, and that a different process has been followed. And I guess when we have amendments to The Education Act, we're dealing with all partners — we're dealing with the trustees association, the teachers' federation.

And I guess the question that I would have is relevant to both Acts. Did your officials share drafting notes, the initial drafting regulations, with all groups regarding The Education Act as well as The Teachers' Federation Act?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I said, there were many issues in The Education Act that were shared with our partners in education. There were some issues that came up as a result of the P.A. amalgamation that came later. And my understanding from the officials, that the drafting notes and instructions were not shared, but the principles of the legislation was shared.

Now what I want to indicate to you, that as we move through the Bill — The Teachers' Federation Act — I'm going to propose five House amendments. They have been discussed with both the teachers' federation and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. They've all been given advance copies, as have you and the member of the third party, of these draft amendments. And that is in keeping . . . and I believe you got those last Friday, member, as I said I would commit to give to you.

I believe that the House amendments . . . I understand the House amendments will address some of the concerns which have been raised and they will clarify the intent of the legislation. And they all fall under clause 27 of the printed Bill before us today, and deal with section 45(1) of the Act. And we will deal with each of these House amendments in turn when we get to the appropriate section.

And I can say to you that I have taken very seriously the concerns of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, and I think that the amendments that we're about to introduce will alleviate some of their concerns.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I move that we report progress.

Bill No. 51 — The Arts Board Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my left is Bill Werry, the acting director of arts and cultural industries and multiculturalism; and on my right, across the aisle is Andras Tahn, the senior arts policy consultant.

And I'd like, before we begin as well, Mr. Chairman, if I may, to introduce some people in the gallery who are here.

The Deputy Chair: — Order, order. The minister has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd ask the people there, who have been very patient, to stand as I call their name. Mr. Vic Cicansky, a visual artist; Ms. Valerie Creighton, the executive director of Saskatchewan Arts Board; Ken Sagal, president of the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Associations . . . or Organizations, sorry, SCCO; Mr. Brian Gladwell, president of the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance; Mr. Patrick Close, executive director of CARFAC Saskatchewan; and Ms. Pat Middleton, executive director of the Regina Symphony Orchestra.

As well, there is a person who was introduced earlier. Jade Rosin was introduced by Suzanne Murray during introduction of guests. She's a writer . . .

The Deputy Chair: — Order, order. I suspect the minister recognizes the inadvertent error of naming a sitting member and I caution members not to do so.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I apologize for my overzealousness and I would identify the member from Regina Lake Centre.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 51 (continued)

Clause 1

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to the minister and the officials and to the guests. Madam Minister, the opposition is delighted about the positive features of this Bill.

We recognize that you now have the ability to bring more private sector funding into the arts by setting up an endowment fund. We recognize that there are four arts community representatives on the board of directors, and there's now an ability to pursue equity investment in our projects, which allows the board to invest rather than just give a straight grant. And there's the protection of the aboriginal traditions concerning the use of names, stories, songs, and other art forms.

In general we support the Bill, but we'd just like some clarification about regulations to be developed and the pooling of funding for professional and avocational artists. Currently professional artists are supported with government funding through the Arts Board and avocational artists and art activities through the lotteries.

We're concerned that combining the government grant with lottery funds will pave the way for government to withdraw the funding from arts and leaving it to lotteries. I'm also concerned that the provisions for an endowment fund and the equity investment may in tough economic times provide an opportunity for government downloading the arts funding onto the private sector.

Madam Minister, what assurances can you give us the government will not withdraw from arts funding as a result of this legislation?

(1645)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member opposite for the question. And I think that 50 years of public support . . . We had the first arts board legislation in North America, the first independent, arm's-length relationship. We've supported public funding of the arts for — strongly — for the last 50 years. So I can't . . . Obviously there aren't guarantees.

But I can say that based on the record, it would not be accurate to project that that was a goal. And I predict that public funding and public support for funding of the arts will continue in the same tradition that it has.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that assurance. Could you just briefly summarize for me about the establishment and the operation of the endowment fund, and how the equity investment by the Arts Board would work.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I should say that this legislation is enabling only, and it will be left to the Arts Board and the SCCO and the other organizations to develop or to evolve into the single arts agency that is contemplated here. So there is no time frame. It's enabling only.

With respect to the endowment fund, it does specifically say in the legislation that the money will not go to the General Revenue Fund, even in the event of some changes in the structure of the board, for example. It's clear so that donors understand that any investment that they make in the endowment will always accrue to the arts and never to the General Revenue Fund.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. Can you tell me what the split will be in funding between the avocational and the professional artists?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well that will be something that will be part of the evolutionary process. And right now as you correctly observed, the Arts Board receives an allocation from the General Revenue Fund and the other organizations do receive money from the lotteries.

So we would take into consideration the advice of those

organizations in how we evolve and what direction the funding would take.

Ms. Draude: — So there hasn't been a decision made specifically on this list right now.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, no, there hasn't been. And we will certainly . . . If there are any changes, it would be done in full consultation with the community affected.

Ms. Draude: — With the avocational and professional artists under one roof, so to speak, what criteria will be applied in approving grants for artists in each category?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that again will be part of the evolution. As it is right now, the Arts Board makes a decision vis-a-vis the professional artists, and the SCCO, their board makes the decisions for others. So they will work out a process that's mutually agreeable to them. And when they reach that point, we will certainly concur and do what we need to do to facilitate it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I understand what you're saying is the Arts Board will make all the decisions then on the criteria and developing these regulations.

I just have one more question on the regulations. Are the regulations being developed in consultation with the arts community at this time, and are they being worked on at this time?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. Actually just prior to the introduction, we had a meeting with the groups that were, you know, represented on the working group that led up to the legislation. And we assured them, and I give that assurance today, that the arts community will be fully involved in the drafting of the regulations, and that work should start very soon.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one final question, Madam Minister. Will the arts community's approval be sought before the regulations are finalized and gazetted so that they are in complete agreement with them?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — In so far as there is a consensus, we'll undertake to do that.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and to your officials.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Minister, and to your officials. The question that I have . . . the particular Bill we're talking about talks about making the board more accountable to communities — I think is the phrase that's come through this. And my first question is basically which particular communities are being referred to when we're talking about making the boards more accountable?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not quite certain. If I get the reference wrong, the member will restate his question. I think the portion that he refers to is the nomination by . . . from within the arts community of members of the board. Informally we've had that in a sense, but at the end of the day they're all orders in council by the cabinet on recommendation of the minister.

Now it will be clear. And of course we try to appoint people that will be acceptable and representative of the arts community. But now we'll be dealing in the future with actual nominations from organizations.

And the legislation describes a floor — a minimum number — that would be appointed in that way, but it could very well be more.

Mr. Heppner: — You mentioned, Madam Minister, you'd be looking at nominations from organizations. Which organizations are entitled to do the nominating?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, that will be one of the issues that will be defined in the regulations, to make that . . . to clarify that point. And the regulations, as I've said, will be drafted in consultation with the arts community.

Mr. Heppner: — As you know, from time to time, because of various items that show up under the heading of art or come out of the arts community, there's a bit of a public furore and outrage at some of the ways that some of the dollars are spent. How far abroad are you going to go in allowing the rest of this province, aside from just the arts community, involvement in this new structure?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I guess I would just like to remind the member from Rosthern that I believe that beauty is in the eye of the beholder; and while we may not all have the same tastes, the peer jury method of allocating resources to artists has served us very well and we will continue to support that.

Mr. Heppner: — Well beauty may be in the eye of the beholder and that may have been a beautifully evasive answer, but I think we need to stay with this direction a little longer. If they're going to be judged by their peers and that's the only group that's allowed any input in, which is what I think you just said, then why shouldn't that also be the only group that's involved in the financing of it? Why are you taking the whole financial responsibility that comes out of every person in Saskatchewan and saying, you're responsible to do some financing but you have no say in it?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the government does, through the order in council process, appoint citizens at large to be members of the arts board, so in that sense they are represented. And I think based upon the allocation of money from the treasury to the arts board, with a million people in Saskatchewan it costs each person approximately a penny a day; so it's not a lot of money.

But I think that while some people may not appreciate it, that one of the roles of the Arts Board and the arts community is to support creativity at the individual level; to support innovation. And so sometimes some of the projects that they might

undertake to support might be considered unconventional by, say our generation; they may be recognized later as very important works.

Mr. Heppner: — I'm not sure what the minister means when she says "our generation," but if we're talking two generations away here or what specifically . . . You mentioned that the cost per day wasn't a whole lot but then possibly every second day, every citizen should be allowed to have their two-cents-worth of input into it, which might be interesting.

You referred to the fact that by order in council there were people from the society at large that could be appointed. And I'd like to have some information as to how that procedure takes place and if there's a group out there that says we want some names to be considered. Is that possible or is this kind of a closed little club that picks names from, as you mentioned earlier on, their particular peer group and that's the beginning and the end of the selection process?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this procedure too will be defined in the regulations. But we have on the current Arts Board — I don't have a list of the names of the people with me to cite for you — but we have a chartered accountant for example; we have a broadcaster; we have a wide range of expertise represented on the Arts Board.

Mr. Heppner: — You may have a large range of expertise as far as their professional backgrounds; that still doesn't address the question that I'm getting at, is why aren't people of various different kinds of opinions and views on the whole arts community allowed in there?

So you have a closed shop and you say, well that's fine because we have an accountant and we have a butcher and a candlestick maker and whatever else happens to be in there. But my question is with people who have other views than are presently sort of held as the core set of views by the Arts Board.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, this legislation will change the practice and make the terms of the directors longer, or the board members, and then there'll be a system put in place likely, where they would rotate.

But up until now, the orders in council have only been of one year's duration, so there is potential change on an annual basis. And I don't think, for the quality of the people, for example, you would be aware of a member of your community who is very much involved with the Station Arts Centre that is currently a member of the board, and I think you would agree that her credentials for that role are excellent. And I would think that all the other board members come from different walks of life, different artistic pursuits or professional pursuits, but I would suggest to you they are all of equal calibre.

Mr. Heppner: — I don't argue with the artistic ability of the people that are on there and the enthusiasm and concerns that they have for it. And the individual that you mentioned I know very well and has a long history of work with the arts, and it's a quality work with the arts as well.

Having in another life worked in other communities, there's a question that I think becomes very important, because if you happen to come down to my particular little hole-in-the-wall office that I have here, you'd see some native art on the wall, which is beautiful. Why, as far as I can see it, are there no requirements for first nations groups to be represented on that particular committee?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, again this will be defined, and the nature of the membership will be defined in the regulations of the new Act. But in fact we currently do have board members that represent the aboriginal community of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Heppner: — Is that by accident or by design?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I would suggest it's a pretty good design.

Mr. Heppner: — Somehow I think that question was evaded.

Given that the board uses lottery funds, why is there no requirement for charitable organizations to be represented because their activities are impacted by the board's use of funds?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the regulations again will be used to define that. But I want to make it clear that in the current structure, the Arts Board has only appropriations from the General Revenue Fund, and the SCCO and the other organizations are funded from the lotteries. But the regulations will further clarify and define those issues.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The first set of questions I had aimed in one way or another at the public's input and involvement in Arts Board policies and how they could get on to that particular board, and it seemed like it was a fairly closed shop from the answers that were given. What other avenues would the public have to give input to Arts Board policies?

(1700)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite raises a very important point, and I hasten to point out that even at the current time, the membership of the Arts Board, the board of directors, is from the general public. The board members don't all represent organizations or certain sectors of the arts community. There are people from the general public. And the new legislation, while it specifies and the regulations will clarify that arts organizations, people from the arts community, are going to be asked for nominations, there will continue to be representatives from the general public on the board.

Mr. Heppner: — There's a whole vast number of that general public we're talking about that seems to feel they have no input into it. And so when something occurs, they end up getting a hold of their MLA from Rosthern to ask the minister some questions. So that seems to be one area of input that they have. And my question basically is, there seems to be that group of people that have quite a different view of the arts than the group

that's on that board right now. And repeating my question, how can those people ensure that that half a million or three-quarter of a million people have some input into that?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, anyone can write to the minister and make suggestions or suggest nominees that they think would be suitable. And we do get letters like that and they're always given due consideration. And I think in terms of accountability, there is no better way than the process that we're using now or the kind of questions that members can raise on behalf of their constituents, as open and accountable, a public place. I think that it's a good process.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think that's the best answer I've had tonight. So now we have some idea how anyone in Saskatchewan can have some input, maybe not successfully, but have some attempted input into the membership on that board, and that's what I was looking for.

Question on disbursement and funds. I believe this section gives the board the power to make equity investments in art projects. Could you give some examples about how that whole system would work?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, probably the best way to illustrate it is by example. One example that's not quite within this area, but is the investment in SaskFILM into commercial ventures. And when they are successful, the proceeds then come back to be recirculated for other projects.

And the Arts Board might invest in some kind of a commercial art venture that might bring profits later on that would come back and could be then recirculated in the form of grants to other artists.

Mr. Heppner: — Just a few more questions, Madam Minister. How often does the board sell off art that it has purchased? Because I believe it owns quite a good-sized collection.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, we do acquire — and we have a provincial collection of approximately 2,000 pieces, but we don't sell them because the collection is in the public trust. And so we try to acquire pieces for the current and future generations to enjoy, but it's not our practice then to dispose of it.

Mr. Heppner: — Well a last question, Madam Minister. On the off chance that this investment procedure that the board's into or the selling off of art that it has might take place in the future, could the government require that the board take some of that money and put it into general fund or into dividends like it does with some of the other Crowns, or is that money guaranteed to stay within the arts community for furthering the art directions in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I think I answered a question of this nature to the member opposite prior, that the money will not accrue to the General Revenue Fund; that it will always be used for arts-related purposes.

And I think another . . . I should mention that, and the regulations will further define it, but there's very likely to be a cap on the percentage of the annual allocation that could be used in that way.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for your time and to your officials as well. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 34 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 70 — The Archives Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Trevor Powell, the Provincial Archivist; and on my left is Perry Erhardt, legislative officer in the Department of Municipal Government.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Another matter was brought to my attention and was deferred, so just a couple of quick questions regarding The Archives Act, Madam Minister. We talked about it, we flagged a couple of issues yesterday, and I guess the big concern is the reasons for the Bill before the Assembly at this time. What was the big push to have this Bill before the Assembly, brought to the Assembly at this time, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well ever since the freedom of information legislation was proclaimed in 1992 there's been some unease about the integrity of the agreements that donors entered into prior to that time. And we've asked for legal opinions several times and so on and didn't get I think, the kind of advice that we needed. And then of course there has been request and an appeal to the Privacy Commissioner and it was felt that it wasn't fair to change the rules for donors who donated papers prior to the existence of the freedom of information legislation.

And to protect the integrity of those agreements that were made in different circumstances when we didn't have freedom of information legislation, and to protect the integrity of future agreements so that we can continue to attract donations that will form part of a well-rounded historical record — and that's why we decided to move in this direction.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Madam Minister, when you're talking about protecting some of the agreements, what types of agreements would be entered into? It seems to me when . . . I guess my understanding of someone submitting information through The Archives Act, you would be submitting it on the basis of the fact that some day down the road through posterity you would be remembered and that this information would eventually become public.

What you're basically telling me is that there are individuals

who actually have put information into the Archives that, if I understand you correctly, basically have asked that it never really become public — it's there for study purposes. Is that what you're saying, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, no. I need to correct the member on that issue. There is no agreement that they would never become public, because our Archives is a public institution.

But to protect the integrity of certain people and certain facts, the agreements, which have a variety of dates, like somebody might say . . . Because don't forget they're private papers, and we're one of the few archives, public archives, that does receive private papers, which forms an important part of the historical record. And usually what the agreement will prescribe is the terms of when the documents will become public. And it might be 25 years after leaving office, 10 years after the donor's demise — you know, whatever the terms are that the donor thinks is appropriate.

(1715)

And you see the balance is this. For instance, our current Premier and our past premier in the '70s have made substantial donations of private papers, as have other legislators. But, for example, we have not a record of . . . Like, Premier Thatcher shredded his. And it's kind of a shame. I mean even though it might have been a sorry period in our history from some of our point of view, the history is lost.

So I think it points out how important it is, if the record in the archives of the history of Saskatchewan is to be kept whole, that we really need to be able to have terms that will attract all the relevant records of people, important people and important organizations in the province.

Mr. Toth: — So, Madam Minister, when you're talking of these records and you're talking about agreements that are entered into — and from your last comments I would tend to think and believe that the reason that this piece of legislation is coming forward right now, even though FOI (freedom of information) has been in effect since 1992 or about five years ago — is there may be some information that had been presented by the former premier, Mr. Blakeney, that — and of course the current Premier was involved in that era — where the two individuals would feel that some of that information at this time is . . . it wouldn't be pertinent that that should be made available? Is that why you're taking this approach at this time?

And I think, Madam Minister, as well at the end of the day people will put and offer information that they certainly don't have a problem with eventually becoming public.

But is there a concern that some of this information, especially in view of the fact that we happen to have a situation where the current Premier was involved in the government back about 20, let's see, 20 years ago? — 60, '77; I think so, 20 years ago — that some of that information might have some sensitivity to the current Premier in his current role as Premier, or the current government, and that's why you feel it's appropriate that this clause is in place, Madam Minister.

So that as long as a person remains in the public, or even a representative of a certain time period is still involved in public life, that they have the ability to say, I'm pleased to present that information to you and I'm pleased to have it in The Archives Act, but I would prefer that that is not really made public until my involvement in public life ceases. Is that some of the areas that you're looking at covering?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well actually, Mr. Chairman, we would be looking at covering all agreements that were entered into with the Archives, and it would include . . . The particular concern has been those that were entered into before freedom of information because that changed the rules, and it doesn't seem fair to do that.

It would also cover Premier Devine and members of the Conservative government, who I am given to understand have also made donations to the Archives with agreements, the terms of which I wouldn't know.

But as I said earlier, there has been this unease ever since the freedom of information Act was put into place.

And actually, the truth is that many of the donors will allow their consent for a historian or a researcher who outlines the purposes of their seeing, having access to the papers. If the donor agrees that that's a good purpose, they will give their permission. So it's not as if they're totally sealed away from anyone's view. It's just that, for instance, the motives of a journalist might be somewhat different.

Mr. Toth: — So as I understand it then, Madam Minister, basically what this piece of legislation is doing, is dealing with that time period prior to 1992. When people donated articles or information or periodicals or whatever to the Archives Board, they were doing it under one set of circumstances. Since 1992, with FOI (freedom of information), there's a different set of rules and you're just trying to address that time period. But what I guess it does at the end of the day, it basically brings individuals under the same rules and guidelines so that you're operating under the same information, the same rules. Would that be a fair estimation of what you're doing?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, what we're trying to do with this Bill is to set the stage for the same set of circumstances that existed prior to FOI vis-a-vis donors and potential donors. Because obviously if you have an agreement and you have a statute, the statute will always prevail. And so we need a statute of equal strength that addresses the integrity of the agreements of donors in order to keep attracting important donations. So that's the intent of this amendment.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and thank your officials.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee report Bill No. 70 of 1997 without amendment. And at this time, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions and thank my officials for their diligence.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 42 — The Wildlife Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have with me my deputy minister, Stuart Kramer, and back here we have Doug Kosloski, the legislative analyst, and Dennis Sherratt, director of fish and wildlife branch of the department.

Clause 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Now this is an important Bill with potentially far-reaching implications and impact on wildlife; on those that coexist with the wildlife, which are first nations people, farmers, ranchers, oil and mining companies; and on those who administer the Act. Except for the big game damage compensation fee, which we oppose and would like to see abolished, we are in basic agreement with this Bill, in particular the protection of the endangered species, which is long overdue.

An important improvement in this Act is section 9, which empowers the minister to enter into agreements with Indian bands respecting conservation and related matters. This is a sensible and also long-overdue change that should lead to a more constructive dialogue between first nations and the government and other stakeholders.

Just a couple of quick questions for the minister. Is there any mechanism for entering into dialogue and agreements with the Metis Nation? And what role does the minister see for forest co-management boards and staffers, the listing of endangered species, and the formulation of recovery plans?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I thank the hon. member for the question. We do have a number of mechanisms where groups and individuals can participate. We have the Wildlife Advisory Committee, which the Metis Nation is a member of, and we also have the Saskatchewan Trappers Association, which includes a number of people with Metis background, and we are also prepared to work with co-management arrangements with Metis groups as well.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll be asking a number of questions as we go along, and perhaps just for the convenience of time here you can perhaps jot them down and answer once we're completely done.

Under the new Act, regulations will be issued that list native plants and animal species that are determined to be endangered, threatened, or vulnerable, and require protection. It is my understanding that either the wildlife advisory committees will be expanded or ad hoc advisory committees will be established to determine candidate species and recommend species for listing based on scientific and community-based information.

There will be conflicting views and interests represented on these committees, or presented to them. An objective consensus decision may be impossible to achieve. First question: in the case of a stalemate, who makes the decision — the minister or a mutual third party?

The process for developing and implementing recovery plans must also be expeditious and as obstacle-free as possible. Expediting recovery plans requires timely consultation, coordination, cooperation, and input from stakeholders to conserve and protect . . . (inaudible) . . . species at risk.

Will the minister also explain in some detail how he envisages the process working in a timely and effective fashion?

And as well, the final point, there are three provincial Acts that can be said to be companion Acts to The Wildlife Act of 1997. These are The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, The Conservation Easement Act, and The Environmental Assessment Act. Will the minister also elaborate on the relationship between these four Acts for clarification?

And finally, there appears to be on the surface at least to be potential for conflict between The Wildlife Act and The Environmental Assessment Act. It is not hard to visualize a situation where a development is proposed in an area where habitat and/or species is at risk. And, Mr. Minister, in the case of a conflict, is it clear which Act takes precedence and who decides?

Thank you very much.

(1730)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry to take so long here. You asked a number of questions there and I'll try to be brief and concise in the responses.

First of all, you indicated as to how a species would be determined to be threatened or endangered or at risk. This information will be based . . . or at least decisions will be based on scientific information. We are relying on science to identify a species and point out the problems with it. And from there, their recommendation will come forward.

From there we will also have an advisory committee. We may use the Wildlife Advisory Committee. We may expand it to include more stakeholders. We want to be inclusive rather than exclusive; so if there are other interest groups which have an interest in a particular endangered species we want their input as well.

The second item you mentioned, the recovery plan will be spearheaded by the department. This would be for a species of plant or animal that is at risk. But again we want to be inclusive. If it's a species that's only found in the Buffalo Narrows area, for an example, we would like the input from the

various interest groups in the area, and the residents. And this would apply to other regions of the province as well. Again we want to be inclusive rather than excluding people.

The third component you mentioned was the three different Acts that are perhaps involved around endangered species. The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act as well as The Conservation Easements Act are pieces of legislation that are available for us to enhance the protection of endangered species, at the same time working with landowners. This program will only be successful if we have the cooperation of landowners, stakeholders, and other people. And by using The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and conservation easements, we will be able to help secure the habitat required by a particular species, at the same time working with the landowner.

The fourth item you mentioned, which Act might take precedence. The endangered species Act would probably take precedence over The Environmental Assessment Act. The Environmental Assessment Act may be implemented to assess the impact on endangered species. So in other words, the EIS (environment impact study) Act would basically be used to determine the impacts on a particular species. So our ultimate goal is to protect the species that are at risk.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I just want to rise to thank you for your answers and to thank the officials for attending and to also, on a final note, encourage and constantly ask the government to consult with some of the northern communities, the co-management boards in some of these northern communities, when it impacts on Acts of this nature, because they certainly want to be involved. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I know that the minister is disappointed that I stood up, but I have a couple of questions I would like to ask him. I don't count very well though, as you try to keep pointing out at times.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to deal first off with the big game damage fund that was put in place last fall. I assume that part of this legislation deals with that, to allow it to proceed. I'm just wondering how much money was collected in that last year on how many hunting licences?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — We don't have the final figures yet. However, we . . . ballpark figure, $600,000 was raised through the $11 licence and about 64,000 hunters — that's hunters rather than licences because hunters only have to buy $11 licence once.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you very much. How many hunters who purchased the habitat certificates did not purchase the big game damage . . . didn't pay the big game damage fee?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well basically, Mr. Deputy Chair, every hunter who bought a hunting licence had to buy the $11 licence. Now granted there probably are a few cases where individuals did not purchase the big game damage licence. In those cases if the hunter was checked and observed not to have that licence, he was given a break this year because it was the first year it was in place. But this coming year it will be the second year, and there will be no forgiveness this coming year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I realize the minister is fairly hard-hearted on this type of thing so I could understand him not having any forgiveness.

But, Mr. Minister, you say roughly 64,000 people had licences; $600,000 was collected. So you're looking at probably in the neighbourhood of 5,000 or more people who had licences that did not have . . . If you just take $10 times 64,000, that's $640,000 so you've lost . . . and yet the other $1 left over . . . so you're looking at at least 4,000 who did not purchase them.

And I know that there were a number of hunters around the province who did not pay, either because they had purchased their habitat certificates before the big game damage fees were imposed or because they purchased from retailers who were unaware that the big game damage fees had to be collected. So would an estimate of about 5,000 be fairly close?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — No, it wouldn't. Youth hunters, people that are younger people buying licences, didn't have to purchase the $11 licence, nor did trappers.

We do expect a handful, but we will have an audit done on the final statistics and figures of our previous year's hunting in the coming months, and we'll have a closer figure. But, no, it would not be anyways near 5,000.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, since you say youth didn't have to pay for it can I apply for a rebate? Because my son did pay for it. Without . . . Not being happy about it mind you, but he did pay for his so perhaps you need to put in place an opportunity for rebates.

Mr. Minister, how are the funds that you've collected — the $600,000 — how are they being held? How are they being invested at the present time? And how much of that has been disbursed to agricultural producers?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Okay. Thank you. This year the money will be filtered through the general revenue account into the farm financial stabilization fund under the Department of Agriculture and Crop Insurance.

And following the passage of this legislation hopefully, the money will not be funnelled through general revenue. It will go out right from our department to the agriculture financial stabilization fund to skip the general revenue process.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. This money was collected last year and there was crop damages from last year. How much of that has been disbursed? And are people still entitled, agricultural producers still entitled to apply at this particular point in time?

What I'm thinking of is damages to crops such as fall ryes and winter wheat which would not necessarily have been evident until the snow melted off of them to see just what kind of damages had resulted over the wintertime.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There hasn't been any of the funds paid out yet because people are still combining crops that were out over winter, and as you say, at this stage, fall rye, winter wheat is sort of beginning its spring growth.

But under this fund people can claim throughout the year. For an example, if elk are in a canola field in July, a claim can be submitted at that time. So it'll be a year-round operation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. I didn't know elk liked canola, but I know that they like flax. Mr. Minister, how will the regulations be . . . have they been established, or how will they be established on the pay-out of these funds and how will it be determined what an agricultural producer is entitled to?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The pay-outs and regulations are based on Agriculture and Food policy and regulations, which would be similar to crop insurance pay-outs, adjustments, assessments. In fact crop insurance adjusters will be used.

So it'll be a standard formula used to arrive at pay-out values, and it'll be of course based on prices of commodities and suchlike as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are these pay-outs going to be based on a $500 deductible and then 70 per cent of the remaining damage, as crop insurance deals today? The only difference with crop insurance is you don't have the $500 deductible?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The crop in the field pay-outs is a minimum claim of $500 instead of a $500 deductible. So if you only had $450 damage done, you wouldn't get anything. But if it was $505, it would be based on $505.

But it's based on 70 per cent pay-out, the same as it is for any other crop insurance losses where there is wind, hail, or drought, or whatever. And we feel this is fair.

The $500 deductible comes into play on haystack damage, and we are going to be looking at that and considering making it more fair, I guess, to the producers. So we'll be looking at that angle of it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When a farmer has crop left out in the field, are your pay-outs going to be based on, say a no. 1 or a no. 2, which I believe crop insurance is a no. 2, is what the pay-out is based on, or is it going to be based on the grade this spring? Because most of those crops left out in the field are going to be of poor quality — may even very well be feeds. What grade of wheat is it going to be based on for a wheat crop?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The pay-out this year for big game damage will be based on standard grade, no. 2 I believe it will be, the same as it is for waterfowl in the fall. So this will be an added bonus because there's very little no. 2 wheat out there after being outside or out in the field all winter.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. We saw a decrease in the number of licences this year, particularly for white-tailed deer. I believe it's 11,000 decrease this year. What do you attribute that to? I know you have talked about an early winter, but we had an early winter the year before, so that's two early winters in a row that we've had.

Has this additional $11 fee had an impact? I believe it's had a major impact on a large number of hunters were in disagreement with this particular fee and therefore decided not to hunt. I don't know if that resulted in a decreased number of animals bagged, but it certainly has had a decrease on the number of hunters that actually bought licences for white-tailed deer.

So, Mr. Minister, what effect has this fee had on it and what are you doing to change that impact?

(1745)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — There was a number of factors which contributed to the reduced number of hunters in the field. Obviously the $11 licence did result in some hunters not going hunting this year. There was an early winter which did plug many of the side roads; cold weather set in. There was also the Metis court decision which said that Metis didn't have to buy licences.

And also if you looked at the availability of white-tailed deer licences, in 1995 we sold 64,000 white-tail licences; in 1996 we sold 60,500. So on those figures it's only a five and a half per cent decrease in the number of white-tailed deer licences, and we expected a 5 to 7 per cent decrease in licence sales due to the $11 licence itself.

The $11 licence is in place this coming year, but since last year the provincial government, out of general revenue, has put in a million dollars . . . $2 million, I should say, and the federal government we hope will come through with an additional $2 million. So the argument that only the hunters are paying will not hold water next year because we have got general revenue money into the fund.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I know you have high hopes of the Liberal government, but I have high hopes that they won't be there come this fall, to make a contribution. But I'm sure that whatever federal government is in place would look more favourably on us than the current Liberal government.

Mr. Minister, the change though of 3,500 hunters. You suggested earlier in a written question that there was a drop of 11,000 licences sold. So where is the discrepancy between the 3,500 you just quoted and the 11,000 that you had suggested previously in a written answer?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The confusion may arrive around the fact that there were 7,000 licences not available in 1996 that were available in 1995. So because those 7,000 licences weren't available, obviously there was a bigger drop. But when you factor in the availability of licences, the decrease is only five and a half per cent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, Mr. Minister, I realize that there had been a drop in the draw licences. And since you've taken over we've seem to have had a decrease again this year in the draw licences available. So I'm not sure what that says, Mr. Minister, about your management of the resource. I liked it better when the other minister was there. At least we had more hunting licences available to us. Now I know that the minister is not personally responsible for that, unless he's been sneaking out there . . . maybe he got his Metis card, I don't know, and has taken a few extra.

But, Mr. Minister, you mentioned that the Metis hunting has been a factor. One of your officials has mentioned that in the media. Do you have any idea how many Metis hunters are active in the field as compared to what there was before the licence structure changed for them?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — No, we do not have any idea of the harvest taken by unregulated hunting, whether it's Metis or status Indian. We simply do not have that because there's just no way of keeping track.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the things that this particular Bill does, it changes . . . it gives the government the power to have the big game damage fund reviewed by auditors other than the Provincial Auditor, which is what is normally done with line departments. Why have you done this and do you intend to use the Provincial Auditor for this fund? And if not, why not?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The issue of the auditors — we've left it purposely open because people were worried about the money ending up somewhere else. Perhaps some people would not maybe be fully supportive of the Provincial Auditor. So if another outside auditor . . . if it's requested, we would certainly oblige an outside auditor to review the books as well.

We want this fund to be accountable. People want to know where their $11 goes and we want to show them.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, the general public is very comfortable with the Provincial Auditor doing the work of auditing these books. I'm not sure I can say the same thing about the government members, but the general public is very comfortable with the Provincial Auditor being accountable for the auditing of these particular books. So, Mr. Minister, I'm sure that he can carry out those duties more than adequately.

Mr. Minister, you mentioned it and I've mentioned it in the past, that hunters and farmers are not the only ones that should be paying for the big game damage as a result, particularly when hunters are the ones who are helping to control their part of the management structure for wildlife. And yet they're being asked to support something that they have no participation in other than the enjoyment of the resources, to a limited degree. Everyone else in society also has the privilege and the opportunity to enjoy those resources.

Now you mentioned the $2 million that was placed into the account for big game damage by the government. Every year hunters are going to be asked though to pay that money in. At some point in time the fund will grow to a level that the department will feel comfortable with as being able to satisfy the needs for big game damage in any one particular year.

At that particular point in time the general public will not be paying into that fund, but hunters will continue to pay into it because this is an annual fee on every hunting licence or every big game certificate when you buy it.

So hunters will continue to pay; farmers will continue to pay with the damages that they suffer being less than the $500 deductible. So there's two groups in society that are paying, hunters and farmers, whereas the rest of us also have an opportunity to enjoy that resource.

Will this fee be rolled back when the levels of funding within the fund reach a certain level to be able to pay out the damages for one year or two years? Or will the general public be asked to match whatever funds hunters are putting into it?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well you are quite right. The one thing we value here in Saskatchewan and Canada is wildlife is a public resource. It's not privately owned, as in some other places.

And I think when you look at it on a broad scale, $11 is really a cheap price to pay once a year to basically gain access to millions of acres of land. And traditionally hunters and landowners have worked very good together, cooperatively, and they respect each other.

And of course one of the things about the $11 licence, if a landowner posts his land he does not qualify for damage claims — that's if it's posted unreasonably. At the same time the home quarter or the cow pasture certainly can be posted.

We talk about other people paying as well. We need to look at the big game damage prevention program — $350,000 of general revenue. We look at waterfowl crop damage prevention, waterfowl crop damage payments. This is millions of dollars which is coming out of general revenue. So in this particular $11 licence case, we have earmarked the hunters. But again, if we didn't put the $2 million in, the fund would be a million dollars in the hole already. Again, if the fund is in a deficit position next year, general revenue money will go in because we're committed to the program.

So the $11 is a small portion of money paid towards . . . for landowners for damage and prevention by a number of wildlife species and through a number of programs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. While you may say it's a small portion, it's nevertheless . . . it's $11 tax on 64,000 individuals, when a million of us get to enjoy the resource. So roughly 6.4 per cent of us are paying for the enjoyment of the other 93.6 per cent.

So, Mr. Minister, it does seem somewhat without equity, somewhat unfair, that a small percentage is expected to pay for everybody. Now I admit you're putting some extra money in from general revenues. Actually the monies that are going in from general revenues are coming out of the Agriculture

department, which would have been money that was allocated to some form of agricultural enterprise or program that was already in place, because no new money was added into Agriculture for this from the Finance department. It was already in place.

So you're taking it out of farmers' pockets in one hand and putting it back into their pockets on another, and saying that you're doing a great thing. The only new money in the program is the $600,000 out of the hunters' pockets.

So, Mr. Minister, it seems that the same two groups are paying for it at the end of the day — hunters and farmers. And general society, the general public, is gaining the benefit this June when they go driving around looking at all the fawns that are out there. They're not paying for it. But you and I as hunters are paying for it, or your and I as farmers are paying for it.

So I think there is still some inequity in that system, Mr. Minister, that certainly needs to be looked at.

When you mention landowners that do not qualify for the compensation because they don't permit hunting access to their property, I'm wondering what kind of exemptions you have in place. You mention the home quarter, you mention the cow pasture, but there are times that you've changed the law — last year — to allow vehicle access to the properties again.

I personally disagree with that. But with written permission . . . What if the farmer has his land posted with signs "no vehicles allowed" or "hunting on foot only," does he still qualify? Because I know a significant number of hunters don't wish to participate in the sport under those circumstances.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — In answer to your specific question, if it's posted "hunting on foot only," "no vehicles allowed," the person still qualifies.

But basically the idea is to allow farmers, landowners, ranchers to protect their property, i.e., their buildings on the home quarter, livestock, fall rye — you don't want somebody driving over that, or an alfalfa field.

So again the adjusters will use common sense, and our conservation officers. But there will be a few cases where perhaps somebody will post their land and let their friends in and then not get their crop off; well there'll be the odd case like that. But we want to use common sense in this approach.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister.

Under section 58 of the Act, which deals with investigations, this section, especially 58(3), gives wildlife officers extensive powers to conduct investigations without a warrant. They contain no provisions for officers to justify this unwarranted investigation.

So, Mr. Minister, you and I are both opposed to C-68 because of that in one of the provisions, unwarranted search and seizures. Now it looks like you're putting it in this very Bill, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — I do believe that the investigator, the conservation officer, does need a warrant. And this has been in place for a couple of decades. They needed a warrant to go on the property to look for illegally shot game or trafficking in wildlife or whatever.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well it appears to me, Mr. Minister, though, that in some of the areas that it would seem that they don't need a warrant though to enter into the properties and to carry out investigations to seize vehicles, to search vehicles. I know if a police officer wants to search a vehicle on the road and the occupants refuse to allow that search, that he has to get a warrant to do so. And it would appear in a couple of the sections that that would not be the case with The Wildlife Act, Mr. Minister.

(1800)

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this section the hon. member is referring to has not changed for a couple of decades. But it does say, for an example, the wildlife officer . . . if, and a wildlife officer believes, on reasonable grounds that a delay necessary to obtain a warrant would result in danger to human life or safety or in the loss, removal or destruction of evidence, that he may proceed with action. And this is probably common sense, but certainly under normal practices a warrant would be required.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, that leaves a lot of latitude though for the officer to make that determination. But no place in here does it say that after the fact he has to justify why he made that seizure, why he made that search. And perhaps that needs to be in place; that the way it should read is that he should go . . . should have to meet the same requirements that he would have had to meet had he had to go and obtain a warrant.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The courts determine whether the search was reasonable or carried out properly. And that's what we have our justice system for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, also in section 83 I have some concerns — liability exemptions for property seizures. If an officer or an employee of the Crown was to confiscate a piece of property, but that property is not forfeit to the Crown, if he leaves your expensive — whether it be rifle — laying in the back of the pick-up and it gets all rained on and rusty, he's not liable for it.

Mr. Minister, I think there you have to include some common sense that proper measures be taken to protect the property as much as possible if it's seized.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well we do believe in safe storage of firearms, and certainly to leave a gun in a truck long enough to get rusted is probably not a good example.

However, this section would refer to confiscation of fish on a hot July day. By the time the officer got back to his headquarters where there's a freezer to store the fish or the game, certainly the meat may have deteriorated, and this is

what it is meant to refer to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, it doesn't say fish or game here though. It says:

> . . . is not liable for any deterioration, diminution, or other devaluation of property seized pursuant to this Act . . .

So that also includes the firearm, the boat, the airplane, the truck, the tent, whatever it might be; that if it's in some way not stored properly and the value deteriorates in it, the Crown or the officer involved is not responsible.

And I think there has to be some common sense put in there. That they have to look after — to the best of their abilities — the property. If you seize somebody's vehicle and you leave it along the road someplace and it gets vandalized, surely somebody has to be responsible for it, and not just the owner of the vehicle.

We saw evidence of that very thing happen this past fall where customs seized a truck. It was driving down the road on the back of a flatbed and a train hit it. It's certainly not the owner's responsibility for where it was positioned. Now it may be the truck driver's responsibility, but it was in the possession of the Crown so surely either the Crown or the transport owner should be responsible for it.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I find it passing strange that the hon. member is zeroing in on this. This piece of the legislation has been in place for perhaps 50 years and we've never had any complaints about somebody getting a rusty gun back or a boat trailer with no wheels on it.

As I say, it is meant for perishable goods, whether it's food or meat, fish or plants, or whatever the case might be. So I don't think we need to worry too much about it. It's worked for a number of years.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, this is the first time this particular pieces of the Act have come forward to be discussed. So we have to take our opportunities when we get them, and since I wasn't here to make the changes 50 years ago, I have to take my opportunities when I get them.

Mr. Minister, yes we may all be here long enough to collect our pensions. Mr. Minister, I'd like to deal some with regulations.

Section (u) in this, it says:

> (u) regulating hunters, the number of hunters, and the manner of hunting at any time and in any area:

I wonder if you could expand on that a little bit to explain what you mean by the manner of hunting?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — The manner of hunting could mean a number of things that may include such things as the method of hunting, whether it's archery, muzzle-loading or shotgun slug, whatever the case might be. A manner of hunting may mean hunting on foot; it may mean you can drive in vehicles on the property.

The landowner should have the discretion to determine to some degree also, the number of hunters. He may not want 50 out in his half-section of land but 5 would be all right. So let this . . . It's to give the landowner some discretion as to what he would like to see or not see on his property.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Was it under this particular regulation then, or the next one, which allowed the use of crossbows for hunting in the last season?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — With respect to the crossbow, use of crossbows for hunting, it was mainly a group in society that are disabled and weren't able to pursue game, that brought this forward. And granted there's certainly mobile hunters that use crossbows as well, but again we brought it in with the muzzle-loading season as an acceptable means to harvest game and provide recreational opportunities for people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm certainly not complaining about crossbows, but I was just wondering if this was the piece of regulation that dealt with that permission or whether it was the next section, section (v), which regulated the manner and use, possession of different types of firearms, ammunition, and — this one I'm not particularly sure on — missiles — I didn't realize we were allowed to use missiles for hunting — or associated apparatus.

And perhaps you could explain just what these missiles are, Mr. Minister, but I'm particularly interested in which one of those two regulations, the crossbows would have been dealt with.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well the word missile is in there, as we might have expected from the legal term, to describe any object which is flying through the air and it . . .

An Hon. Member: — Projectile.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — That's right, it can be an arrow or a bullet or a rock or shotgun slug, whatever. So it's just a legal language.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Since either one of these clauses — I'm not sure which one since you never informed me of that — allows you to add or delete types and manner of firearms or implements that fire projectiles, since you have that ability within this particular area, Mr. Minister, have you or your department given any consideration to allowing handgun hunting? And that would allow you the opportunity — these two pieces of regulation — to set the limits on it, to set the calibre, to set the velocities, muzzle velocities, and various other things to regulate it. Have your department investigated this and have you given it any consideration?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well thanks to your friends in Ottawa, federal regulations does not allow hunters to use handguns to hunt anywhere in Canada. So it's not an option.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, as you and I both

know, they're certainly not my friends in Ottawa, they're the official opposition's, the Liberal Party's friends.

But, Mr. Minister, I'm not sure that it says you can't have a handgun for hunting because I know that a number of people do have that opportunity in Canada, not necessarily in Saskatchewan, but in Canada. And that one of the major stumbling blocks is a lack of enabling legislation in the provinces that allows hunting. Because it specifically says "rifles" in there in rifle season; it doesn't say handgun season. It describes what a muzzle-loader is, and in no place within the regulations or the Act does it permit a handgun to be used. If that kind of enabling legislation was in place, it doesn't necessarily mean handgun hunting would result in that because of the federal legislation, but it would allow some opportunities perhaps to move on to other jurisdictions to attempt to achieve that.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — As I understand it, no other jurisdiction in Canada allows handgun hunting, and if it did try to, I'm sure your friends in Ottawa would . . . legislation would override the provincial legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, you and I both know they're not my friends. As I stated earlier, they're the Liberals that are in Ottawa presently, and they're strangely silent on this — perhaps not strangely silent.

Mr. Minister, one last piece in this particular Bill that I do have some concerns about is vicarious liabilities in section 73. It allows a person to be prosecuted for an offence committed by an employee or a helper when there's no evidence that the person had any knowledge of the offence. Why is this in place? Why is it necessary, and isn't it unfair that you can be prosecuted for something you had no involvement in?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — You had to come up with a good one. The answer is basically that if an industry or business employs people, they're basically responsible for their actions. And whether it's an oil and gas company or some industry like that, they ultimately . . . the company is responsible. Now if the company can show that clearly that he had no idea that the employee was doing this, we're certainly prepared to resolve the problem. And again if it ended up in court, all of that evidence would be there as well; but it's basically the employer is responsible for his employee's actions.

(1815)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. So if one of your officers in the field was in contravention of the Act, then you should be responsible for it, and you should face the charges, not that employee. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well as the legislation points out, the owner or the operator does have the opportunity to show evidence to the contrary, that he should not be responsible. So it's not a black and white situation. So the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Pretty onerous on the employer.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Well again, ultimately the employer is responsible. But yes, there are cases where he may not be, and we're open to that argument.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well let me ask you one final question then, Mr. Minister. If one of your employees driving a department vehicle is going down the road and is caught for speeding, do you pay his ticket as his employer and therefore responsible because you didn't put a governor on that vehicle that did not permit it to exceed the speed limit?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Now first of all, that charge would not fall under The Wildlife Act so I would not be responsible. So the answer is no.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 93 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in today and answering our questions.

Bill No. 11 — The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Darcy McGovern of the Department of Justice is with me this afternoon.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, a couple of questions regarding this Bill. And I know that we've had opportunity to discuss some of the implications of this Bill, and I think in previous discussions were very clear that the process of a census occurring every five years and having a structure in place that then would redesign boundaries is not in our best interests, that is, the people of Saskatchewan. And we've indicated that the amendment has proposed to ensure that the major census, which occurs in the decennial situation, is the census that would be the one that is in place for reviewing of boundaries. And that is what is proposed in the first portion of the Bill and we have no problem with that.

The second portion though, that refers to voter population and total population, I think requires some clarifications, and maybe some suggestion, if I might. The term "voter population" is used in section 14 and I'm wondering how something as critical as that occurred in 1993 and how it escaped the scrutiny, the very close scrutiny, of members at that time.

What comments do you have in that respect.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We just have no explanation. I carried the Bill back in '93 and we had this same debate that we're

having over this Bill, that is to say, whether the crucial thing was the total population or the voter population. The Assembly decided in the end to go with the total population. And I don't know why . . .

An Hon. Member: — It was a one-sided decision.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes. The member says it was a one-sided decision and I think it probably was. I've forgotten just how we resolved it, but the government made up its mind. And I don't know why section 14(1) was left in that shape. We have no explanation for it and no memory of it. We were headed in the other direction. And it's just one of those things, one of those mistakes that happen. Sorry I can't give you any more logical answer than that.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While you are attempting to clarify section 14 by taking out the word "voter" and replacing it with "total," my suggestion might be is maybe we can back up and correct all the other sections, and go to the word voter rather than total.

And I know that that's not something that is before us right now. The comments though that I do want to make and I want you to take under advisement and see if there is something that can be done about this . . . And I know you've referred to the debate in 1993 and the positions taken by different members of the legislature regarding total; regarding voter.

And I guess I want to point out that, you know, as individuals we are all elected by the same process and that is one vote, one individual. And that is why, as an opposition and as a caucus, we're looking at this Bill and saying, why should the determination of a geographical area be different?

And I know that I've heard you say in this House, yes, but you end up representing all the people in your constituency. And that's very true. But the selection of you or the selection of me as an MLA is done by the voters — one individual, one vote.

And I feel very strongly about this position that now with the process that's put in place with the federal government enumeration, with the kind of voters' list that we'll have that will be updated on a regular basis, we can identify very quickly who the voters are in a specific geographical area. And therefore I think what you're developing then is a very harmonious and consistent process across the province, excluding the two northern constituencies.

And I fully realize . . . in fact I must commend the two MLAs that represent the North because they represent tremendously large geographical areas. So there are provisions within the Bill that exclude those two constituencies.

When we're looking at the rest of the province, we know that as we move in Saskatchewan, and indeed our population hasn't changed significantly over the last 50, 60 years, we see urbanization taking place. Rural Saskatchewan: the younger families that have traditionally been there; we know that the size of farms are getting larger. And as a result we're seeing families move to the cities, to urban centres. Not just cities, urban centres. And as a result I think you have a greater concentration of population.

So when we divide our province, the balance of our province on that basis and we end up with a figure — roughly 17,000 and some odd is the number that is arrived at — to determine 17,000 people in a rural area requires a massive area. In that situation though the voters that are there become a greater number because of the age of the people.

And I know the members have pointed out numerous times that there is quite a discrepancy in terms of voters, actual voters in a constituency. We have a high in the high 11,000, almost 12,000, and we have a low of nearly 9,000. So we have a tremendous difference. Those are the people that elect us. Those are the voters.

The system of choosing a constituency based on the actual total population, I think, causes discrepancies. It causes problems. And I would encourage you, Mr. Minister, to take a look. And I know we have to put in place the process now, because we have just had a census and we need to ensure that that process is corrected and indeed we say what we mean and we mean what we say.

But I encourage you and your department to take a look at this and see whether or not there is the ability to amend sections . . . I think they're very clearly . . . I identified them last time — sections 11, 12, 13, 14 — where we can change indeed the word "total population" back to the words "voter population" and develop a consistency right across this province in terms of how the geographical area called a constituency is determined. I ask for your input.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's a very interesting presentation of the point. And I'm intrigued by the way that the member puts it.

We have reflected on this question since the last time it was debated in the House and we certainly understand the legitimacy of the argument. I think that our constituencies, Canora-Pelly on the one hand and Saskatoon Fairview on the other, puts the situation about as dramatically as it can be put in this province.

Canora-Pelly, a constituency I know very well, is, as the member says, an ageing population, and the young folks have been leaving there for years and years, from the time that I was young and the time that you were young, and . . . young, I mean when we were graduating from high school and deciding on what we were going to do with the rest of our lives.

And we see that as a continuing trend in the province. We don't know what it is that could come along and change that in any very dramatic way. It seems to go on and on year after year, in good times and bad. It just goes on, and it seems to be one of the demographic forces that we have to learn to live with. And it's going to result, if we continue on our present path, with rural seats getting larger and larger and larger, and more difficult to service. And that is an obvious problem.

(1830)

The permanent voters list, I think makes your argument a practical one. Until now it hasn't been practical because you don't know how many voters you've got until you're halfway through an election campaign, under the way in which our election Act has been administered up to now. That is, the enumeration didn't start until after the writ was dropped and we're about 10 to 14 days into the campaign before we get the first cut of the voters list.

So because you don't have that information you can't very well draw constituency boundaries and hope to come out with anything like equality. The only information we've had to this point is census data.

Now if the permanent voters list works — I believe it will; the federal government thinks it will; this government thinks it will — then we've got a new ball game. Then we've got to come back and look at this argument again. And we're prepared to do that. We think we'll be in a position to do the next provincial election on the voters list, and we're working to that end.

This question's going to have to be revisited. It's not as simple as I make it out to be nor as simple as you make it out to be. I mean we've got to balance these two arguments and think very hard about it. But I find your argument quite compelling and obviously this question is not put to rest yet.

Mr. Krawetz: — And I want to thank the minister for those comments. I would like to just add one final point, and I think that you've raised it — you've raised it very well. That in rural Saskatchewan, indeed we do see an ageing population and we do see urbanization taking place. So the point that I want to make is that I don't think we should do sort of a double, a double penalty to that area by then saying, because your total population is declining, we will now create larger areas for the number . . . I don't know what the number would be if we looked at voter population in terms of the averages, but I would imagine it's somewhere between 10 and 11,000 per constituency. At least then we're all working off the same page.

And I know, and I've said this, you've said this, that we would love nothing better than to see a revitalization of rural Saskatchewan and a drawing back of young families. And hopefully that's going to occur; I think it can in some areas.

But when we determine the actual constituency sizes . . . And I know you've made the point that there's a need to look at whether or not the permanent voters list can work. I concur with you; I think it can work. I think with our technology as it is today, it will work. There will be an election before the next census, which is in the year 2001, and by that statute there will be a provincial election. So we know that that is fixed. But before we get into the year 2001 there may be the opportunity in the next session, next winter, to say okay, let's take a look at this, let's see whether or not it's practical, and whether it can be worked on.

And I fully understand that this is not as simple as I'm trying to paint here, it is complicated, but I think it can be worked on and I would offer the assistance of the opposition with you as minister, to indeed arrive at a system that is fair and equitable for all people in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, sir.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 6

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Between the time that we put this Bill into the House and today, there has of course . . . the census numbers have become available and that requires us to include a provision in the Bill that makes it clear that notwithstanding that fact, the Clerk of the Executive Council is not required to obtain a copy of that part of a census showing the total population of Saskatchewan or to provide notice of the census information to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is what's provided in the legislation now. And more to the point, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is not required to establish a commission pursuant to the Act. So . . .

The Deputy Chair: — Order, order. Minister, I've been listening. I believe you're explaining the amendment. The first . . . we have no amendment before us. The first order of business is for you to read the amendment into the record and then proceed from there.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move an amendment as follows:

Add the following Clause after Clause 5 of the printed Bill:

"Transitional

6(1) In this section, **'census'** means a census conducted pursuant to the *Statistics Act* (Canada) after the 1991 census and on or before the date *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 1997* is assented to.

(2) Notwithstanding *The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993:*

(a) the Clerk of the Executive Council is not required to obtain a copy of that part of a census showing the total population of Saskatchewan or to provide notice of the census information to the Lieutenant Governor in Council; and

(b) the Lieutenant Governor in Council is not required to establish a Constituency Boundaries Commission pursuant to that Act for a census**".**

I so move.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I just wonder if the minister could explain a little bit as to why this particular change, this particular amendment needs to be put in place.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, what happened is that since this Bill was introduced in the legislature the census numbers have become public. And under the . . . in those circumstances under the existing legislation is triggered the obligation of the Clerk of the Executive Council to obtain a copy of the census as it relates to Saskatchewan, and to give notice of that census information to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And the present legislation also provides that the Lieutenant Governor in Council is then required to establish a Constituency Boundaries Commission.

So the event that triggered the provisions that we're trying to amend by this Bill happened before we got the Bill passed. So we need to put this amendment in to relieve the system of the obligations under the former Act. That's pretty simple, isn't it?

The Deputy Chair: — The question before the committee is new clause after clause 5 of the printed Bill. Is that agreed? Carried.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 9 — The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me Dean Clark, who is the director of the heritage branch in the Department of Municipal Government.

Clauses 1 to 21 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1845)

Bill No. 10 — The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act, 1997

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me this evening Lily Stonehouse, who is the assistant deputy minister in the department, and Doug Muir, who is the director of the apprenticeship and trade certification unit in the Department of Post-Secondary Education.

Clauses 1 to 22 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me this evening, Mr. Jim Brickwell, a senior policy analyst with the Department of Municipal Government.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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. 44 — The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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. 40 — The Residential Services Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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. 58 — The Saskatchewan Assistance Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill 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. 51 — The Arts Board Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill now be 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. 70 — The Archives Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill 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. 42 — The Wildlife Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — 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. 11 — The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 1997

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

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Leave granted.

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

Bill No. 9 — The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill 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. 10 — The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill 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. 63 — The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill 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.

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 59 and Bill No. 60.

The Assembly adjourned at 7 p.m.

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