

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have petitions this morning on behalf of residents in Saskatchewan. The prayers reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to these petitions are from the communities of Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Big River. I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present this morning. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitions come from Wawota, Carlyle, and Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, to present petitions as well and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed by individuals from the Redvers, Goodwater, Springside, and Antler areas of the province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Regina, and Coleville. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

And these are signed by the people from Coleville, Kindersley, and Kerrobert.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of people in the province. The issues they're concerned about are the severance payments to Jack Messer and calling for an independent public inquiry to find out all of the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco. Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of St. Brieux, Lake Lenore, and Melfort, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The petition I have to present today states:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are from Rose Valley.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present petitions as well today to do with the Jack Messer, Channel Lake situation. People from across Saskatchewan are obviously concerned about the issue. These petitioners come from the Coleville, Kindersley area of the province of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present them on their behalf.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, the petition has been signed by the folks from Willow Bunch, Assiniboia, Coronach, and Crane Valley; Mazenod as well. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise again today to present a petition. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

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

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of those concerned about the Plains Health Centre closure. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities such as Gull Lake, Maple Creek, and a number of them from Swift Current, which is very likely to be a future location for one of our forums on the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now the hon. member will recognize, of course, that he's not to enter into debate when presenting petitions. And I know he recognizes this.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing forward petitions to try and stop the Plains closing. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are basically from Ponteix and some from the Pambrun areas of the province. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present petitions from citizens of the province concerned with the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The petitioners who have signed this petition come from Pilot Butte. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, the following petition. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This group of people, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Piapot and the surrounding area.

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions for private Bills are hereby presented and laid on the Table:

By Mr. Koenker — Of the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan, in the province of Saskatchewan; and

By Mr. Kasperski — Of the Fondation de la Radio Française and l'Association Culturelle Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan, in the province of Saskatchewan.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters: the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; saving the Plains Health Centre; and cancelling severance payments to Jack Messer and calling an independent public inquiry into Channel Lake.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 29 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services regarding the new child benefit and employment system computer program: what was the total cost to the government for the planning, development, and implementation of this computer program, and was the work on this program tendered?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Easter Celebration

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today begins the final weekend of the Easter season, the major religious observance for millions of Christians the world over. The season of Lent is one of contemplation, preparation, and commitment — a season which culminates in the joyous reaffirmation of life and promise, the promise which is at the heart of the Easter celebration.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as other members have observed in years past, this Assembly is not the proper forum to promote a particular religious creed. But the suggestive significance of Easter to our society and to our lives goes far beyond any particular belief. Easter is our most optimistic holiday because

it heralds the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The biblical image of life out of death is mirrored in what we see happening all about us. This is a season we celebrate the victory of life over death, of hope over fear. The season in which we renew a faith that good ultimately does triumph over evil.

Easter also marks for us and for most people a break in our temporal activities — time to catch our breath, visit our families, do a little gardening, and prepare ourselves to return to our duties here with renewed energy and commitment to our duty.

So on this day we ask for peace among all peoples, reconciliation among the nations, and for health and respect for the less fortunate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't know too much about the game of chess, but over the past few weeks I've started to learn a little more. As we've seen from the NDP's (New Democratic Party) actions at Crown Corps, the pawns are all rallying around to save the castle.

Today Murray Mandryk compared the move of putting the Deputy Premier before the investigation instead of the Premier to sacrificing the queen to save the king. Well for starters, I think Her Majesty would take great offence at being compared to the Deputy Premier.

It's clear from the course of events that the Deputy Premier has also been demoted to the level of a pawn, putting him in the company of hon. members like the member from Regina South. And for another, I don't think the Premier should be called the king. He's more like the bishops scooting sideways all over the board to avoid testifying.

Of course, experienced chess players know that the most powerful piece is the knight. Using it's big L moves as a base, it can slip around all attempts by the stodgy old pieces to block its advances.

Mr. Speaker, as the Channel Lake investigation continues the Saskatchewan Party caucus will continue to act as the knights on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. No matter how often the government attempt to sideline this investigation, we will pop up in front to ensure that the public scrutiny continues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Passover Celebration

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sundown tomorrow also marks the beginning of Passover week, the week Jewish people the world over observe the preparation for it and the flight from oppression in the land of Egypt as told in the *Old Testament* Book of Exodus.

This observance of course, is one on which Easter is built, a more ancient but still very contemporary celebration. As the member from Meadow Lake said, this is not the place to mention a particular creed, and in our province Passover ceremonies will be greatly scattered because in numbers, Jewish people are a fraction of our population.

But the historical, legal, religious, and ethical significance of Passover is far greater than any account of its celebrants in a particular location. First, the exodus of the children of Israel from Pharaoh's Egypt is probably the most significant migration in the history of western civilization — a migration resulting from one people's refusal to be enslaved by another.

This refusal and the subsequent events led directly to the founding of the principal institutions of our civilization and the creation of two of the major religions of the world.

Passover then represents a belief in tolerance, in freedom, and in the collective struggle for the rights of people.

So on this very important weekend I say, be well, shalom, and thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Hospital Bed Crisis

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis there's more evidence of a hospital bed crisis here in the city of Regina. Today we read that an 80-year-old stroke victim wasn't admitted because there was no available beds. We also hear an Oxbow man express frustration because his father's surgery was also delayed. He suggests, if people are missing surgery, they must be dying.

And how does the Premier respond? He says these concerns will be alleviated after the Plains hospital closes. This government doesn't get it. There is already a bed crisis and there are no plans to fund more beds once the Plains closes or if the Plains closes. But the Premier doesn't stop there. He also adds that the Regina Health District could even cut more beds without harming services if doctors discharged people earlier.

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder this government's approval rating is at its lowest level since being elected. They have lost touch. They refuse to acknowledge the health care crisis, but worst of all it appears that they just don't care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the March labour force survey, courtesy of Statistics Canada, is out. And once again it contains good news for Saskatchewan workers, Saskatchewan working youth, and the Saskatchewan economy in general, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan unemployment rate for March 1998 was 6.3 per cent, more than a full percentage point better than in March a year ago. Although Saskatchewan's labour force, Mr. Speaker, increased by 9,500 last March, there are 4,800 fewer

persons unemployed as well. There were 466,600 people employed in Saskatchewan last month — at the end of the winter, before spring planting begins, by the way — 14,300 more, Mr. Speaker, than the number employed March a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, here's the fact I really like from this report. Contrary to what the members opposite say, the children who are supposedly leaving this province in droves does not happen. People are now coming in, and in this age group are working more than ever before. The age group 15 to 24, 71,800 people are working in this age category, Mr. Speaker. That's 500 more than a year ago.

Good programs, Mr. Speaker, frugal government, confident, hard-working people — all make for good employment statistics. And behind every statistic, Mr. Speaker, is a worker and a family contributing to our economy here in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Easter/Passover Celebration

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend brings us an important holiday. Easter is an ancient historical holiday that happens on the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox.

There are many customs that relate to Easter. Some are based on historical beliefs and others are based on conventional customs. Christians celebrate Easter as the religious holiday commemorating the resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ.

The Christian celebration of Easter is related to the Jewish festival of Passover, which is celebrated around the same time of the year.

Mr. Speaker, both the cycle of nature and our religion make this a time of renewal and rebirth.

On behalf of the Liberal opposition I wish all members and staff, their families, and all the people of Saskatchewan the very best this holiday weekend. To those who follow the Christian calendar, I say happy Easter, and to our Jewish friends, I say happy Passover. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Edam First Responders

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the second year in a row, Edam first responders have been hailed the best in the province. The team captured the skills competition title in Saskatoon in March.

George Greening, Julie Levasseur, and Kevin Foulds demonstrated their mastery of first responders skills and abilities as they captured first place once again. The provincial skills competition is held in conjunction with the first response conference where first responders from across the province showcase their skills and share their knowledge.

The skills competition is designed to test a number of skills required in emergency situations, and I'm very proud of the first responders in my area. The Edam team was pitted against competitors from across the north-west.

The second consistent victory by the Edam squad is a testament both to the hard work and dedication of Julie, George, and Kevin, and to their training program, which is supervised by Troy Heystek.

I congratulate all competitors at the first responders skills competition and encourage them to continue refining their skills in the pursuit to provide high quality of pre-hospital care that the residents of Saskatchewan have come to expect. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Concerns

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last couple of weeks I've received over a thousand letters from Thunder Creek households worried about health care. While the Premier says he cares and his minister and colleagues say everything is okay, my constituents are telling the real story.

I have before me a letter from Susan McNutt of the Moose Jaw district. Susan writes and I quote:

With only one MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in Saskatchewan and such a waiting-list, some people who need an MRI done cannot wait. They have to go to Alberta.

Ms. McNutt since has phoned me and told me that she is one of those people now waiting on one of this government's all-too-long waiting-lists. After spending two weeks at the Plains she's been at home waiting for two months to hear when she will get an MRI to find out what's wrong with her.

She would go to Alberta, but like too many people in Saskatchewan she doesn't have the money and still hopes her own province can give her the care she needs, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ms. McNutt is, as we speak, trying to take care of her children and still run a cattle operation to support her family. All the while she continues to suffer from an unknown ailment and endures headaches, nausea, and other torments. Like many others however, Mr. Speaker, she continues to wait.

I'll send copies of this letter across to the Premier and the Minister of Health and ask them to make this certain woman . . . or get this woman the care that she needs. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'll leave the Premier with an inspirational quote . . .

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for weeks now the Saskatchewan Party has been saying NDP ministers knew what was going on in Channel Lake every step of the way. We now have a Justice department legal opinion that says exactly the same thing.

The Justice department concluded that Jack Messer could not be fired with cause because the SaskPower board and the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) board knew about his illegal activities and they did nothing to stop him. In fact they condoned and concealed his illegal gas trading activities starting as far back as 1994.

Mr. Speaker, many NDP ministers who are still in cabinet have been on the SaskPower board and the CIC board since 1994. Those ministers must start taking responsibility. My question is for the Minister of Energy, the former SaskPower minister: why did you and your colleagues condone and conceal Jack Messer's illegal gas trading activities as indicated in the Justice department's report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Words used by the member opposite are loose and, I would argue, misleading, because the opinion is very clear in the Deloitte Touche report — and you know because I've quoted it many times in the House — the words are used that incomplete — incomplete — information was given to the board in an untimely fashion and decisions were made without proper briefing from the officials.

Now the headline in the *Leader-Post* confirms the issue of whether or not information came in a timely and a complete fashion. This is what the debate is all about. This is what the debate is all about. Now you will pick the words that you choose, but the issue of the inquiry, the issue of the inquiry is to do the interviews — all of them, not selectively as you would want to do for political reasons — but listen to all of the individuals in the hearing process and then come to a conclusion. Otherwise this will be very difficult because you'll have to do all of the interviews, listen carefully . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Minister, this is not my conclusion; it's the Justice department's conclusion. The Justice department says CIC became aware of Jack Messer's illegal gas trading activities on March 14, 1994 through a report by David Dombowsky. The Justice department's legal opinion dated March 4, 1998 says, and I quote:

The gas trading activities engaged in by Channel Lake clearly went much beyond the mandate authorized by SaskPower's board. This may have constituted just cause for (Jack Messer's) dismissal. However, his activities and the gas trading itself were condoned by CIC failing to order Mr. Messer to cease after becoming aware of the trading through the Dombowsky report. SaskPower's board also condoned the gas trading activities.

Mr. Speaker, there's about a dozen current ministers who served on the board since that report. To whichever minister wants to answer: why did you cover up this activity?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, what the member knows is nothing, but nothing he is raising today wasn't already made public in the Deloitte Touche report. It was clear four

weeks ago — four weeks ago — that there was unauthorized gas trading. We knew that. We knew that.

You're not digging anything out or finding anything new. The words "unauthorized gas trading" was talked about four weeks ago. Four weeks ago. Now the member here . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Now . . . Order! Order. Hon. members, all hon. members: Order! Order. The question was quite audible and able to be heard. Now I'm having great difficulty being able to hear the minister provide the response because of the continuous commentary from the official opposition. And I will ask for the cooperation of the House to enable the minister's response to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The issue here is, as the member raises, the issue of the potential of unauthorized gas trading. We reported that to the House four weeks ago. We reported it to the House. It was in the report.

An Hon. Member: — You knew. You knew!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well look, if you would read the report or if you would get someone to read it to you — if you would get someone to read it to you, it was delivered to the House four weeks ago — the issue now is, the issue now is the inquiry that's going on where you can bring in witnesses and ask them the questions. Mr. Messer is coming before your committee; ask him those questions. I am coming, yes. And Mr. Lautermilch, the member of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order! Now I know the minister will be aware that he's not permitted to use proper names of members of the House but to refer to them only by the position they serve here. And I'll ask the minister to very, very, very quickly wrap up his response.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, if they would have read the report they would know about the potential of unauthorized gas trading. We reported it. You're not reporting anything here. What you're doing is grandstanding, trying to dig yourself out of a hole where you're losing a leadership race. That's what you're doing, and good luck to you. But I'll tell you, the member from Kindersley is campaigning hard for Mr. Hermanson.

And so you can try your best to bring new information to the House — which is four weeks old — but it isn't working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue here is who knew about this activity. Under the heading, the concealment of gas trading losses, the Justice opinion says and I quote:

. . . Channel Lake failed to file financial statements with CIC in the Legislative Assembly as required.

. . . such failure was in fact condoned by both SaskPower's board and CIC . . .

... the failure by both SaskPower's board and CIC to order production of these financial statements in a timely fashion is fatal ...

So first of all you conceal the illegal gas trading activity. You conceal the fact that there is million of dollars of trading losses. It's not my conclusion. It's the Justice department's conclusion, and that means every minister knew what was going on. My question is, why did you conceal these facts and try to cover them up?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Again I say to the member opposite, it's been concealed so well that for the last four weeks it's laid on the Table here, if someone would have read the report to you ... (inaudible interjection) ... Yes, exactly, that there was the potential of unauthorized gas trading.

That's what you're saying today, and that it was reported in an untimely manner to the board. We all know that. We admitted it; we said mistakes had been made and now we're doing an inquiry, and we delivered a thousand documents to you; well you say it's a cover-up.

Look, when Grant Devine was the premier of the province ... and the member from Kindersley, who is now going to get to his feet, and supported Grant Devine as the leader, now pretending not to be a Tory for political reasons, will get up and talk about open government.

Here you try to get the Public Accounts Committee shut down. We give you a thousand documents and you talk about cover-up. Look, it's nonsense and it's ridiculous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, my questions are for you this morning. The minister keeps saying this whole sorry mess is going to be reviewed by the Crown Corporations Committee. Let's just for a moment take a look at who's on that committee. These are some of the very same people involved in the cover-up.

On March 14, 1994 when David Dombowsky first reported the illegal gas trading activity to CIC, who were one of the members on the board of CIC at that time? It was none other than the NDP member from Regina Dewdney, and it was also the NDP member and current Provincial Secretary. And these two jokers are sitting on the committee today ...

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. The hon. member will acknowledge, I'm sure, that he has just engaged in the use of language that is not parliamentary. I'll ask him to withdraw the remark and proceed directly to his question. He's been lengthy in his preamble.

Mr. Boyd: — I withdraw that remark, Mr. Speaker.

These two members are now sitting on the committee that's supposed to be reviewing this mess. They were part of the cover-up then and they're part of the cover-up now.

Mr. Premier, this is a huge conflict of interest, having those members on that committee. Will you immediately remove

these two members from the Crown Corporations Committee?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that the cover-up that you talk about, the cover-up, now let's follow this cover-up through.

When we found out about it in December, we called — we did — called on CIC officials to do a review which led to a complete review by Deloitte Touche. And we brought the reports here to the Assembly.

And we set up the CIC committee to ... the Crown Corporations Committee to do a review and we've delivered a thousand documents. This is the cover-up you talk about.

Now I would like you, sir, I would like you, sir, if you're being honest, to compare it to your government, the Grant Devine government, on any issue — on any issue — and tell me when, ever, any documents to this extent or openness was followed by that administration. It was never.

And so I would say if you can't be honest, maybe it's you who should resign. Maybe it's you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, if these hearings were being held in a court, this would be immediate grounds for a mistrial. This is a massive conflict of interest. We may have to call those two members who were involved with the cover-up at that time, and now they're sitting on the committee.

Let's just go through this again. Your Department of Justice says you have to pay Jack Messer severance because CIC knew about the illegal activity in 1994 and condoned it. The member from Regina Dewdney was the Vice-Chair of CIC at the time, and the current Provincial Secretary has been the Chair of CIC since that time, and those two now are leading the cover-up in Crown Corporations Committee for you, sir.

Mr. Premier, it's now time to clean up this entire mess, clean up the cover-up, come clean with the people of Saskatchewan. Will you do the right thing for all of Saskatchewan and call a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Now we know what the motive is here. The most disruptive member of the committee — the most disruptive member of the committee — who tried to advise his caucus, who tried to advise his caucus that the Public Accounts Committee shouldn't sit ...

This is what he did in a disruptive manner — which he always does — got his Chair of Public Accounts in deep water for not calling the committee and then he gets moved to Crown Corporations Committee. He's still stinging on that, and he doesn't want the committee to work.

Unlike other members of the opposition, who say we have received every document — every document — that the opposition asked for. That's what was said yesterday. Now why

do you, sir, former Conservative member, supporter of Grant Devine, who ran up a debt of \$15 billion, why don't you want the process to work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rural Health Care

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health indicated twice in the past week that he had a solution to the bed crisis in Regina. The minister stated in Assiniboia on Tuesday night, to the absolute horror . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Order. I will ask, I will ask all hon. members to come to order including the third, including the third party House Leader, who shouts from his chair at the Chair. Order! All hon. members will, all hon. members will come to order now. Order.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister stated in Assiniboia on Tuesday night, to the absolute horror of the people in attendance, that perhaps the solution is to boot people from hospital sooner. And what does the Premier say? He agrees, adding, and I quote: "The district could cut more beds without harming services if doctors discharge people earlier."

Patients are already being booted out so fast they have to take an ambulance, not only to the hospital, but from the hospital, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, are you hearing from doctors or nurses that patients are staying too long in hospital? Or are you just simple hearing from your NDP bean counters?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health from the government, plus several other members of the government caucus, were very pleased to attend the meeting in Assiniboia and to participate in the meeting. I want to tell you what they told the folks in Assiniboia.

And by the way, having reviewed Pasqua Hospital and the construction, and the construction at General Hospital, I can report to this House that the bed numbers for Regina will not be reduced at all. Not only will they not be reduced, there will be greater efficiencies in the provisions of the services. There will be an MRI; there'll be a world-class, first-class renal cardiac unit.

Southern Saskatchewan is going to get the best quality health care ever once this project is complete in October of 1998. People know that. What I would ask the hon. Liberals opposite is to stop spreading misinformation about this issue and, if they're really interested in health care, to come to the aid of this government in asking the Liberal counterparts in Ottawa to stop dismantling medicare and start building it like we are here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, people in rural areas are alarmed by other comments made by the minister as well. And they fear they maybe signal the next phase of the government's so-called health reform.

The minister told the crowd in Assiniboia that he now has rural hospitals with an average daily count that is below capacity. And he asked the crowd: what do you expect me to do with these hospitals? We know that the minister has been involved in other meetings in which rural health care was the focus. He's used the term, consolidation, and of course, consolidation is just another word, Mr. Premier, for closure.

Mr. Premier, are more rural hospitals on the chopping block in the next phase of your government's so-called health reform? And can you give us the names of these hospitals that you're going to cut?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, of course the hon. member opposite who, I say with the greatest respect, probably does not understand the fundamental concepts of medicare since he advocates a two-tier system for health care. This is on the record of *Hansard*, and the people of Saskatchewan will be told this over and over and over again in the months ahead. The member opposite obviously does not understand nor does he accept.

He belongs to a political party which historically has fought medicare's establishment. He belongs to a political party which today on a national basis is decimating the health care system.

We in Saskatchewan are putting in \$1.7 billion. The highest expenditure for health care in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, with no bed loss for Regina, and the finest service for southern Saskatchewan come October when the switch is made over. This is going to be a state-of-the-art health care system. That's our commitment to health care, and not yours, which is an abandonment of . . . (inaudible) . . . Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North Battleford Emergency Services

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years anesthetists in North Battleford have provided weekend on-call services, but not this holiday weekend. For months they have been warning that they will withdraw on-call services unless an agreement is in place.

But the government has simply ignored the situation and done absolutely nothing. As a result, there is no on-call list now in Battlefords Union Hospital. Surgeries cannot be performed even on an emergency basis at this regional care centre.

Mr. Minister, this is a holiday weekend. Thousands of families will be on the road — we are on the Yellowhead national highway system — tragedies may occur.

Tell this House, what are you doing to ensure emergency care in the Battlefords, an on-call anesthetist list? What are you going to do besides simply saying, ship them to Saskatoon?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence that, with respect to any emergency that may arise, that will be dealt with by physicians and anesthetists in the Battlefords and

elsewhere in a professional manner, Mr. Speaker. A professional manner that does not involve the kind of fearmongering we hear day after day from the Liberals and Conservatives, that people aren't going to have health care, Mr. Speaker. People are going to continue to have health care.

And on a case-by-case basis, if there are any emergencies in the Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, those emergencies are going to be dealt with by the health care system in the professional and excellent manner that they always are. And the professional medical people in the Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, are going to act professionally, as they always do, and people are going to be taken care of.

And this is not the politics of fact, Mr. Speaker, that we hear day after day from the opposition; this is the politics of fear, Mr. Speaker. That's what it is. And we're going to continue doing what we do do, which is provide the best health care system in the world here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Minister . . . Mr. Speaker, the minister is certainly correct if he says there's a lot of fear out there, but that fear is generated by you, not by us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Gas Supply Contract

Mr. Hillson: — I'd like to follow up on that, but unfortunately there are so many issues that have to be raised against this government, it's like shooting fish in a barrel. Liberal research has uncovered yet more damning evidence that the taxpayers of this province are continuing to pay for your mismanagement and poor judgement.

I'm specifically referring to the 10-year, exclusive contract with DEML (Direct Energy Marketing Limited) by SaskPower, which industry experts now tell us is a sweetheart deal. Experts in the gas industry have advised us that the gas supply contract is nothing but a gift. The management fees that will be paid to DEML are triple the industry average — not equal to, not double to, but triple industry standards.

Will the minister explain why we are going to pay three times industry standards to DEML for 10 years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, again the 10-year gas contract we've debated a number of times in the Assembly over the last month. And we've talked about its relationship to the Channel Lake sale. All of this is under review by the inquiry of Crown Corporations Committee, and the documentation is there.

My understanding of the arrangement of the commission that DEML will get on the arrangement has nothing to do with the price of gas. It's a flow-through of the gas price, so they make no money on the gas and their commission ranges between 1 and 3 per cent — 3 per cent for the first amount of gigajoules, then 2 per cent, then 1 per cent. But it's also my understanding

that it's within a range that's acceptable within the industry.

Now when the officials come to the committee, I would urge the member, who I understand is not an expert on commissions for gas, as I am not . . . but the range of 3 to 1 per cent is within industry standards. Now if that is not true, we should be challenging our officials in the committee, and I would urge you to do that. But for you to come here and act as if you've found some new, important piece of information, when it's been discussed for 30 days here in the House day after day, is not accurate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the first day we could consult with industry experts to ask if this contract is an average or if it's a gift. And they told us it's a gift. They're telling us that DEML may make up to \$10 million in excess profits over what industry standard would call for. I would remind the government that you tore up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts claiming that they were too rich, too generous to the farmers of this province.

Industry experts are telling us this contract is too rich, that it gouges us. It gouges us by the same people who hoodwinked us over the sale in the first place. Why are you paying \$10 million to DEML over and above industry standards? That's what the industry experts tell us. Why are you doing this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Again I would say to the member opposite that the contract — the 10-year contract, supply contract, for SaskPower which resulted in part as the sale of Channel Lake — is being reviewed by the committee. Now I would ask you the officials' names who you've consulted so they can come to the committee and give their explanation to the committee.

Will you provide for the House the names of the officials that you have consulted with today? Will you give them to us today? Because what I want to do is be able to confirm and bring these officials to the committee. Is it . . . Who are they? What experience do they have? Because the officials in SaskPower tell me that the range of 1 to 3 per cent is within industry standards. Now if you have information from officials, bring them here, give us the names, because we want to hear it in the committee as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the revelations yesterday raised real questions as to what we really got for the sale of Channel Lake. Did we sell it for 15 million? Well not if part of the deal was a gift back to the purchasers of \$10 million. Let's do the arithmetic, Mr. Minister.

We sold Channel Lake for 15 million, but over the next 10 years we give 10 million back to the purchasers, in excessive fees. That leaves \$5 million we sold Channel Lake for — that's all. So we didn't sell it for 27 million or 21 million or 15 million, we sold it for 5 million. Will you admit that's the net, that's all we got for dumping Channel Lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I thought Grant Devine's math was bad, but I'll tell you, if you were running the economy of the province with that kind of arithmetic . . . and the member laughs from his seat, the member laughs from his seat.

But I want to say to the member opposite, you came here with great credibility and we expect more from you than this kind of phoney-baloney arithmetic where you say that the commission, if it is within the range of industry, that then you say this is part of the sale price, you know that isn't accurate. You know that isn't accurate.

So what I would urge you to do, which you didn't do when you stood on your feet, is give me the names of the industry officials who say that a range from 3 to 1 per cent is not within industry standard. Go outside the House, go outside the House if you have credibility and give the names to the press today. Do it today. Give it to us. Because I don't think that you're being totally honest in what you're bringing to the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Rail-line Abandonment

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to defend the interests of grain producers in rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Federal government inaction is facilitating the planned abandonment of the rail line from Prince Albert to Birch Hills, a line known as the CN (Canadian National) Tisdale subdivision.

Just two days ago this Assembly urged the federal Liberal government to immediately halt all rail-line abandonment projects until the Estey grain review has completed its work, submitted its recommendations to the federal government, and those recommendations have been given due and thorough consideration with a view to providing maximum benefit to grain producers.

Our government has been demanding time and time again that the federal government use its influence to prevent the railways from dismantling our rail system during the Estey review. For the Estey review to be credible, the federal government must halt branch-line abandonment while the review is under way. It makes absolutely no sense to be reviewing a system that is being dismantled while the review is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I have written to and discussed this very irritant issue with the federal Minister of Transport on several occasions. And I've received assurances from Mr. Collette that Canada transportation Act is working as it should and that railways will behave in a reasonable and responsible manner

when lines are put up for abandonment.

Today I provide a prime example of how the Canada transportation Act is not working, of how the rail companies are not being reasonable, and exactly why there must be a halt to branch-line abandonment during the Estey review.

Mr. Speaker, the 21-mile CN subdivision from Birch Hills to Prince Albert is at serious risk. This past December, CN announced the line would be discontinued and sold for salvage if a buyer could not be found to continue to operate it.

Removal of this short section of track will remove the only direct rail link to the Port of Churchill from Prince Albert. It will destroy the viability of the entire CN line from Prince Albert to Hudson Bay. This rail line is a strategic, east-west link for our entire province. This section of rail line serves the Port of Churchill, a port that as we speak is undergoing a multimillion-dollar refit. A port that farmers in Saskatchewan have long supported.

What sets this Tisdale subdivision apart from some others that are in the process of being abandoned is that this line is not only important for local producers but also for the long-term economic interests of our province. Mr. Speaker, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), and the department commissioned a study to look at rail lines in Saskatchewan.

The Birch Hills to Prince Albert line was clearly identified by that study as a strategic rail link for central and north-east Saskatchewan. As a result, my department is working diligently to examine all options that will prevent the removal of the Tisdale subdivision. We are currently working with the communities in Prince Albert and Birch Hills area to identify options. We are attempting to negotiate with CN to save this rail line.

This government cannot and will not stand by and watch as this important link in our province's core rail system is ripped out. Abandonment of small sections of branch lines is clearly in CN's best interest and not in the best interest of grain producers and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada transportation Act does not work. This lack of action on the rail-line abandonment issue by the federal government is totally unacceptable. There must be a halt to abandonment during the grain review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to bring this important issue to the Assembly's attention today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to rise to the minister's statement this morning, and I very much agree with her that the 21-mile CN subdivision from Birch Hills to Prince Albert is very important to northern Saskatchewan and actually the whole province. We realize when the rail-line abandonment happens the cost to our roads are astronomical.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would somewhat question the minister's sincerity when she says this morning, I rise today to defend the interest of grain producers, because we've seen the stand that the Agriculture minister has taken with grain producers in supporting Bill C-4 and wanting it hurried through when hardly one farmer that I've talked to supports that Bill.

She also goes on to say that she supports or gets up to defend rural Saskatchewan. Well if they were defending ... this government was defending rural Saskatchewan, why have you been downloading on them for the last seven or eight years, to municipalities. Even last year, for an example, \$29 million.

I mean you can't do it both ways. You get up one minute and support rural people and the next minute you cut the funding off that was there.

Mr. Speaker, if this government was also serious, successor rights come into this problem. If you really wanted to help short-line rail, abolish successor rights. Every group we talk to it is a problem. It's not the only problem but it's one of the main problems.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, even though that we agree with the moratorium, Mr. Ralph Goodale and the federal government has written off agriculture. I agree with the government. They have done absolutely nothing out here to help sustain agriculture in this province.

But I also think that Saskatchewan Agriculture minister has done the same. We saw GRIP go and we've seen every program that was out there really helping agriculture disappear under his tutelage.

So, Mr. Speaker, if this government believes in moratoriums they could go one step further. Why don't we have one for the Plains Health Centre then? If a moratorium is good in one spot it certainly is good with the Plains Health Centre.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I support the minister in this respect, on the moratorium on short-line rails, but I think this government could go a lot further in doing their part for Saskatchewan agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the minister here this morning and her government. I do find it rather humorous that this government and this minister would stand in defence of grain producers in this province, even what has been their record. We don't have to speak on federal issues, issues of federal jurisdiction, to know just how little agriculture means to this government.

We had the issue of the GRIP contract being torn up. We've had an agriculture budget that saw nothing but slash and burn since this government came into power. So it is rather humorous to hear a minister of this government rise in defence of grain producers in this province, because it just goes to show the hollow rhetoric that we hear from the members across, the hollering from the members, the back-benchers; that's all they can do. But I know there's nothing they can do within their own caucus to influence the cabinet ministers, the one which we've

heard here this afternoon as well.

It's also interesting to hear this government now finally getting on the same page of the book as the Liberal opposition and the Tory Party as well. For the last two years, for the last two years ...

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I will ask for the cooperation of members — all members on both sides of the House — to allow the hon. member for Thunder Creek to be — order — to allow the hon. member for Thunder Creek to be able to provide his response to the ministerial statement in an uninterrupted manner.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting to see that this government would finally get on the same page of the book as the Liberal opposition. As I was trying to say earlier before I was shouted down, the Liberal opposition in this province for two years now has been asking for a halt to rail-line abandonment — so this isn't a new issue — well before the Estey Commission was ever struck, and certainly we still do support that rail-line abandonment be halted until after this review is completed.

I also find it interesting — and I have to quote what the minister said here this morning, saying, I quote, "This government cannot and will not stand by and watch as this important link in our province's core rail system is ripped out."

Well that sounds mighty fine, Mr. Speaker, but are they prepared to back that rhetoric up with some bucks? Is that what we're talking about here? Is this finally a branch line ... finally is this a short-line candidate that this province is ready to support? Well maybe. Perhaps we can read between the lines here.

But I would suggest that it's nothing more than some hollow rhetoric again from this government. And that's all that agriculture has been able to enjoy since this government came to power in 1991.

Now the minister also mentions how the lack of action on rail-line abandonment by the federal government is totally unacceptable. But I think equally as unacceptable is this government's lack of action on fixing up our failing highway system in this province.

The highway system in this province is in shambles. We're hearing daily from people with problems related to hitting the potholes, or we're hearing daily from people who can't get their vehicles out of the trenches that are being made by all of the truck traffic in this province. It's certainly a lot of grain traffic, but all kinds of truck traffic — everything moves by truck these days — and it's something that people are saying to us, the government has to start taking some action, beyond words.

(1100)

Fifteen years isn't soon enough to twin the Trans-Canada Highway they're telling us. And it's certain a 10-year project that we've been talking about since last year's budget of putting some piddly amounts additional into the highway system just isn't going to cut it.

We need a lot more attention paid to the transportation system in this province. And that's where this government should start doing a little bit of homework instead of trying to lead everybody off down the path of, let's all go off and attack the federal government for what they're not doing. We've already been there. We're doing that when it's needed. But get back to the business of doing what you should be doing, which is dealing with what you change here.

I heard, I heard that the UGG (United Grain Growers Limited) . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order, order, order. Now the minister's statement . . . Order. Order. Now the hon. member has the floor. You need not to be shouting across the floor while the Chair is on his feet. I recognize that the minister's statement — order — I recognize that the minister's statement was quite lengthy, inordinately lengthy this morning, and that — order — and that in response the hon. member has already spoken longer than the minister. And I will ask the hon. member if he wishes to make one final comment in conclusion. I'll permit him that, but then we will proceed.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. One final comment. I heard the UGG president on the radio this morning saying that their company is prepared to stop the closure of elevators on branch lines until this review is completed. I'd suggest that this government could do a lot to influence other big grain companies in getting them to stop closing elevators on these branch lines as well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave to comment on the ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking the minister for sending her ministerial statement to me this morning.

It's a very interesting time of year. We're gearing up for pre-seeding, Mr. Speaker. And my comments will be brief, but indeed they will convey what I've been hearing as I've been going throughout rural Saskatchewan.

I've been very, very fortunate each and every year since about 1985 to participate in rural municipality ratepayer supper meetings, to meet with and speak with people in every corner of the province. And I think what was conveyed to me last week, this past week, really is reflective of concerns across the province amongst farm families.

They are faced with a tremendous number of stressors which have not changed: the stressors of unpredictability of weather, unpredictability of machinery breakdown, pest disease and crop failure, government policies and regulations, low commodity prices with limited cash flow, high input costs and so forth. And this is one area that genuinely does disturb them. It concerns them and it should concern all of us.

But one of the things that's overriding all things is that when

this government came into power, Mr. Speaker, there were many, many people from every political stripe that accompanied this government to Ottawa to talk about the prices in agriculture and what could be done. Each and every one of these people who participated in that trek have said the same thing to me, that this particular administration has shown no vision, no direction for agriculture, and they most certainly have not shown a commitment to it by their actions.

So I think it indeed does ring hollow today to listen to these words, because people don't simply want to have a government say words. They want a government to take action. And it is with a heavy heart that I must admit that I too, in accompanying this group to Ottawa, say that they have not followed through, they have not provided commitment, they most certainly have not provided direction, and there is no vision to save rural Saskatchewan from this administration. Thank you.

Mr. Goohsen: — I would, by leave, comment briefly on the statement, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all colleagues in the Assembly for offering me this opportunity to speak briefly to the ministerial statement. Madam Minister, I say directly to you I support your initiative on this issue unequivocally . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member will recognize of course, that in bringing debate to the House he's to direct it through the Chair, and I'll request that he do it in the normal manner.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rephrase that. Mr. Speaker, through you I will say to the minister unequivocally, I would support you in this initiative and on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Having said that, Mr. Speaker, and given that unequivocal support to the minister, I want to say also to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, that perhaps we should broaden your horizons a little on this issue. You talked about the CN, and of course that's the railroad that basically occupies the north part of our province. CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) of course, is in the South.

And while I'm not too sure how many branch lines there are in Saskatoon, in the Cypress Hills, which comprises 10,000 square miles in my constituency, we do have branch lines, and this is a real problem. And of course CPR are the villains in this part of the world.

We have the Notukeu line, Mr. Speaker, that I would particularly like the minister to put as an addition to her notes as she travels to Ottawa, either by letter or by telephone or by travelling there. It travels of course, through Shaunavon, Eastend, Consul, and Frontier, in those communities, and it is under threat of disappearing. That's a major part of miles and miles that will be without service.

We are in threat of losing the Hazlet line, and of course that line over to Fox Valley that now goes through Leader. That's an extremely important line to the other part of our constituency. It would leave us with a main line basically through that entire part of the province, and it's a big part of the province. And it's many, many miles for trucks to travel.

So, Madam Minister, I ask you on behalf of the constituents to include those arguments along with your own.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I'd request leave of the Assembly to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a person who has travelled down to Regina from Nipawin and who has travelled many times representing his constituents in the last legislature in this House. And I'm talking about Mr. Tom Keeping, who is sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell Mr. Keeping that we miss his poetry. I suspect there is a reason for being here, is he's to look over the opposition to see which one of those seats he's going to challenge in the next election.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to welcome Mr. Tom Keeping to the Assembly today. We too miss your poetry, and I'd like to wish you a happy Easter. And as far as a seat that may be available, look over at the corner; it's right there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome Tom.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce one further guest in your gallery.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all members. I would like to introduce a visitor to your gallery today, Mr. Speaker, that is also well-known to many members in this House because he spent a fair bit of time working in this building serving constituents and constituencies across this province. And I point to Mr. Lorne Hill, who is in your gallery, a constituent of mine, very active in our community, as you can tell by the shirt he wears today, very active in amateur hockey. So I would like all members to join with me in greeting Lorne

Hill to the gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to submit a full and complete answer to question no. 25 as requested, and with leave also submit the answer to question no. 26.

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — The responses to questions 25 and 26 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 16 — The Certified General Accountants Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 16, The Certified General Accountants Amendment Act, 1998. This Bill furthers our government's goal of simplifying and streamlining Saskatchewan's legislation by repealing The Accredited Public Accountants Act.

In 1987 the accredited public accountants merged with the certified general accountants. At that time the accredited public accountants received the certified general accountants designation so they all became CGAs (certified general accountant). As a result, there have been no accredited public accountants in Saskatchewan since 1987. This Act will continue to prohibit use of the designated initials previously awarded to the accredited public accountants.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Also this legislation restricts the designation, Hon. CGA, only to those who have been granted an honorary membership.

Mr. Speaker, I see that members of this House have long awaited these changes, and so I'm happy to move An Act to amend The Certified General Accountants Amendment Act, and I move An Act to amend The Certified General Accountants Amendment Act, 1994, be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly respect the reasons that have been brought forward for this particular piece of legislation. In fact when our caucus has been looking at it, we don't see any real problems, any real reasons to hold it up.

I believe it's, as we saw in 1987, the attempt at that time to simplify the process. This just goes one step further and addresses some of the concerns regarding the title of CGA hon.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, as we look at it very carefully, it just seems to be common sense. And therefore seeing there's no reason to hold it up and allow the business . . . in showing cooperation from the opposition, which is hard to do on many occasions, we will allow this Bill to proceed to committee.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Certified Management Consultants Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 17, The Certified Management Consultants Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — This is a new Bill, Mr. Speaker. For the past two years we have been consulting with the Saskatchewan Institute of Certified Management Consultants on the development of self-governing legislation. The outcome of that process is the Act before you today. We are extremely pleased that with the cooperation of the management-consulting profession, this has been brought to a successful conclusion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Certified management consultants are widely utilized. Their clientele includes industry, municipal, provincial, and federal governments, Crown corporations, and small businesses. Certified management consultants are valued for their expertise in human resources, financial planning, strategic management, marketing, and operations management.

Currently there are no standards to determine who can be a management consultant in Saskatchewan. The number of consultants is growing and the quality of advice they provide varies widely.

Self-governing legislation for the institute will provide assurance to those who use their services that certified management consultants are trained and competent. It will reassure their clientele that the Saskatchewan certified management consultants meet the necessary professional standards.

A Saskatchewan chapter of the Institute of Certified Management Consultants was incorporated in 1990. That institute is affiliated with a national institute of certified management consultants which has existed since 1969.

This legislation gives the Saskatchewan institute the authority to ensure certified management consultants have the appropriate education and experience to provide advice on a wide variety of issues with which they regularly deal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Through this Bill, the institute will have legislation comparable to that of other professions and certified management consultants in other jurisdictions.

As with other professional legislation, a high degree of public

accountability is required. For example, representatives of the public will be included on the institute's council and disciplinary committee. These appointees represent the interests of the general public. The Act will also require the institute to file an annual report. In addition, bylaws that affect the public will require approval of the government.

This Bill will come into force on a day to be fixed by the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act respecting Certified Management Consultants.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill that we have before us today is a fairly straightforward piece of legislation, or at least on the surface it appears to be standard professional association legislation. The main intent of the Bill is to allow certified management consultants to regulate themselves through a professional association. This is, however, Mr. Speaker, a new Bill rather than an amendment to an existing piece of legislation, and therefore will require a closer look before we allow it to pass.

For starters, Mr. Speaker, this Bill highlights the diversity of services available in the financial sector. There are, as we all know, certified accountants, certified management accountants, certified general accountants, and so on. Whenever we are faced with legislation of this kind we have a duty to ensure that the public is clear about what the different professions do and what services they provide.

Further, we cannot assume that legislation that is appropriate for one profession is appropriate for them all.

The government maintains that this Bill brings professional standards for certified management consultants into line with other, similar professions. With this, as with all professional legislation, we want to be very careful to determine what these standards are and whether they are the best for the serving the needs of the public and of the profession.

Further, this Bill and others like it bring in some relatively new concepts to professional ethical standards, such as one professional's duty to report the offences of a colleague. We would be negligent if we did not give careful consideration, whenever such measures are discussed, to spell out exactly what these duties are and how they impact on the delivery of financial services.

It is the usual assumption with Bills of this kind that the profession has been thoroughly consulted before the Bill is presented. While we trust that the government has likely taken this step, it is our duty, as the opposition, to double-check with the associations involved to find out what has been done.

Further, it's almost inevitable that there will be dissenting voices within this profession that may have different views on what should be included in such legislation. For these reasons the official opposition feels that more time should be spent on this Bill to cover off these concerns. Therefore, I move debate on this Bill be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 1 — The Arts Board Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 1, The Arts Boards Amendment Act, 1998.

The Arts Board Amendment Act proposes to remove the distinction between professional and vocational artists which currently is in the Act. This change has been requested by the arts community, and I'm pleased to help the community work toward a goal of equal and like treatment of its many diverse members through this amendment.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations — now SaskCulture — and the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance requested these clarifying amendments regarding professional and vocational artists. And I commend them for making the request.

This Act further proposes to clarify the roles and responsibilities of donors and the Arts Board regarding the endowment fund. This new fund will allow the Arts Board to establish a permanent capital fund which would attract individual and corporate sector donations in support of the arts.

In response to community requests, the Saskatchewan Arts Board requested the addition of two clauses to clarify the intent of section 26 of the Act. Some potential donors expressed a concern that donated funds might end up in the General Revenue Fund rather than in the arts community. The intent of the original provision establishing an endowment fund in the Act was to have endowed monies directed for the arts in perpetuity. The new clause ensures that the intent is now airtight and it should please donors.

The arts community is looking forward to changes proposed in this Act. I urge your support of these amendments. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill No 1, The Arts Board Amendment Act, 1998.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Arts Board Act, I believe, is a very important piece of legislation and needs to be carefully reviewed, because over time there has been a number of very serious discussions about the actions that the Arts Board was taking. And I believe that the minister has identified some of those when she talks about whether or not the funds that were being contributed for art development in this province were actually reaching the artists, or whether or not it was being used up in the General Revenue Fund, simply disappearing into that black hole of government. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that that particular piece of the Act be clarified.

We also have a number of other areas in this, in The Arts Board Act, that we believe are of some concerns, because previously the board acted as an unaccountable social assistance agency for those that were classified as professional artists, which the board alone defined, Mr. Speaker.

We've observed that in the past these professional board members often voted themselves large grants while rejecting grants to people from outside of the main urban communities and art communities. The people from small town Saskatchewan seem to get very little of the grant monies, while the members who were closely associated with the Arts Board received the majority of those particular grants. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, the board members often went to art gallery openings in places like New York and Europe. We believe that those are not necessarily the best ways that the Arts Board money should be spent, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned earlier about the donors that had some concerns about the monies going into the General Revenue Fund. Again that type of concern, Mr. Speaker, is hopefully going to be addressed by this and we'll delve into that more later.

One of the points that we need to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, is that, however, that this Act is simply changing the wording of the Act; it does nothing about the attitudes of those who are appointed to the board.

What the government needs to commit to, Mr. Speaker, is the appointment of those that were under the term avocational, or perhaps those that don't include art as their entire life function, Mr. Speaker, that are employed other places. You might call them amateur artists, although their art, Mr. Speaker, is very good in a lot of cases. Perhaps we need more of them on the board of directors for the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Mr. Speaker.

One of the final notes was the note that how donations are being spent are only suggestions. And at the end of the day the board has its own . . . can take its own advice on what it does; it does not have to follow the directions of the donors. We believe that the Arts Board needs to follow the directions of those who wish to contribute towards the art community in this province; that their general revenue funds that they receive are those that they can use for the other areas, but if someone says, I want to donate for this kind of a project, then the money should be directed to those projects.

I think this is a positive move overall, Mr. Speaker. It's unlike the attempt of the government to charge taxes on art donations that were coming into this province from outside. That was absolutely abhorrent, Mr. Speaker. It would simply attempt to increase the revenues of the government at the cost of art and artists in this province.

People were becoming reluctant to donate art if the art gallery or museum or whoever was receiving those art donations had to turn around and pay taxes on that art coming in from outside of the province. That was absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. At least the government recognized there that they were on the wrong track and made the changes, but it was not until after a number of people complained that that happened.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to further discussions on this particular Bill. We look forward to the comments coming from the arts community on this Bill; therefore I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill at the present time.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 10 — The Saskatchewan Opportunities
Corporation Amendment Act, 1998**

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to begin second reading debate on An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act.

The amendments are necessary for two reasons. First, because of the great success of Innovation Place, the world-renowned research and development park in Saskatoon; second, because of demand for development in Regina to support advanced technology. We want to continue to build on this success.

Before I turn to the details of these legislative amendments, I want to talk briefly about how SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) is playing a key role in this government's economic development strategy. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest concerns of Saskatchewan people is jobs. The government is working to address that concern and I'm proud to say we're having some success.

There was a record high number of people working in our province last year. Even more encouraging is the fact that there were more young people working and there were more full-time jobs. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. Our government uses a number of vehicles and strategies to help create the atmosphere for companies to expand and hire people. One of those vehicles is the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation or SOCO.

This provincial Crown corporation was established in 1994. Since then it has invested more than \$23 million in a total of 44 projects. These investments are paying off in terms of jobs for Saskatchewan people. Clients estimate almost 500 jobs have been created; more than 800 have been maintained. As well there have been about 1,500 part-time and temporary jobs.

SOCO invests in a variety of sectors. For example, Birsay Livestock in Birsay; Del-Air Systems in Humboldt; Sci-Tec Instruments in Saskatoon; and the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw are just a few of the firms in which SOCO has invested.

But investing in companies is just one part of SOCO's mandate. The corporation also supports economic growth through the development of infrastructure which encourages business growth in our province. Specifically, SOCO develops and manages research and development parks, highly specialized forms of real estate.

Innovation Place, the R&D (research and development) park in Saskatoon, has developed an international reputation as one of the world's most active centres for ag-biotech research. It houses state-of-the-art bio-fermentation support facilities and specialized greenhouse research units. The park is enhancing our ability to compete in the global market place with our agriculture and value added products.

Tenants include firms in the fields of agriculture, biotechnology, computers, pharmaceuticals, and many others. The park has attracted international businesses to Saskatchewan, including AgrEvo from Germany, Groupe

Limagrain from France, and Monsanto from the United States.

The R&D park has been extremely important in our efforts to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. About 1,600 people work at Innovation Place and it generates more than \$150 million worth of economic activity in Saskatchewan.

(1130)

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I had the pleasure of announcing that SOCO would be developing a new building in support of a research and development park at the University of Regina. This comes in response to demand from the growing advanced technology sector. This sector is a crucial one for Saskatchewan to build on as we compete in the information age. It will become even more important in the years to come as we seek to support innovative approaches to growing our economy. By investing in advanced technology now, the young people of Saskatchewan will be prepared to compete in the global, knowledge-based economy of the future.

Mr. Speaker, we have a proven track record with Innovation Place in Saskatoon and we have a bright future with the planned development in Regina. SOCO's cash flows with respect to R&D parks are positive. The corporation receives rental revenues from tenants that support its operating costs, including interest costs associated with its borrowings. Cash flows are used to partially offset depreciation and pay down debt.

At the end of 1997 SOCO had borrowed \$76 million for the development of research parks. The corporation has announced plans to develop a facility adjacent to the University of Regina. Demand for expansion from new and existing tenants at Innovation Place continues.

In the next year or two SOCO's capital requirements may result in a need to exceed the \$100 million borrowing limit approved for the purpose of developing research parks. SOCO's legislated borrowing limit related to R&D parks needs to be increased to \$150 million so that the corporation can continue to support the development of innovative sectors of our economy and attract business investment in our province.

I hasten to add the capital required for research parks is investment capital. It is not a grant or a subsidy. SOCO pays interest on the money it borrows and invests.

Mr. Speaker, the development of research parks has resulted in wealth creation and jobs for the people of our province. We are attracting international businesses, supporting the growth of key sectors, and gaining an international reputation for establishing sectors of strength.

I believe that through responsible, coordinated development, R&D parks can be an effective tool for economic development. SOCO should be given the legislative tools necessary to carry out this function and therefore I urge all members to support these legislative amendments.

I move that Bill No. 10, The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with a few comments before I move adjournment of debate on second reading of Bill No. 10, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the government now is moving back into an area that in the early '90s and certainly in 1994, when they changed the former SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) Corporation to Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation, to SOCO — renamed it to try and diffuse a number of concerns and issues that had been raised over the years in the way SEDCO operated — that they're now basically moving back into an area that they suggested SOCO or SEDCO or with any other government agency, should not be involved in.

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the minister, I certainly compliment the minister and the government on the fact that they recognize that Saskatchewan can certainly be a place where we can do research and development and get involved in some of the technical, logical changes that we've seen and note take place over the past few years, but for many years, Mr. Speaker, have not taken place in this province.

I believe we do have a trained workforce. I believe we do have young people with a lot of intelligence and a lot of abilities in providing the technology, providing the research, providing the development to build for the future. And it's pleasing to see that this current government certainly recognizes that governments of the past, who were talking of it as well, see that this is a benefit and can be a benefit to our province, not only in educating our young people, but as well preparing our young people to face the future. And I think that's positive.

And so when I look at what SOCO is doing and what it's attempting to do, there are some very positive areas that we see SOCO's involved in, and we compliment them for that.

However, we do have a problem when we see SOCO being given the opportunity now to get into capital expenditures and construction.

The reason I would suggest that it's something that we need to look at very carefully is the fact that while it may look innocent on the top, down the road, Mr. Speaker, doesn't necessarily mean that the changes today may not be reflected in bad decisions down the road.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, some of this . . . the limits that are being put in place right now on capital construction projects can be done without reference to cabinet . . . or can be given approval through cabinet. It really doesn't allow for public debate to see whether or not SOCO would be moving into an area of development or construction that would be beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan.

And just leaving it in the hands of cabinet, or even in the hands of a board, which in many cases are a board that continues to be made up through appointment by government, I think, Mr. Speaker, as we are seeing currently taking place in the province of Saskatchewan the debate over the Channel Lake accord in SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation), one would have to question whether or not this is the right move; whether or not

there should be methods whereby you can make boards more accountable or even cabinet.

And so we've got some major concerns when we look at the suggestions that are being brought forward and the mandate that is going to be given to SOCO and the expenditures of funds.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at research and development, and I believe the minister talked about AgrEvo and Monsanto, some major players in the world in regards to chemicals and other commodities, that a firm such as this, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the minister and her government are looking at the fact of talking to agencies such as large corporations and asking them to invest something in Saskatchewan rather than asking the taxpayers to always do the investment.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important for businesses to become stakeholders in this province as well. It's important for them if they want to look at research, and rather than just going and looking to governments around the world and the government that will give them the best deal and asking the taxpayers to foot the bill, that it's important that businesses begin to realize they have a role to play as well.

And it would seem to me that in some of the areas that this Bill is talking about, we could certainly approach businesses, we could certainly approach major companies and ask for their direct involvement for investments in our province rather than always going to the Saskatchewan taxpayer for those investments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see this Bill as maybe going back a little bit on some of the commitments the government made a few years ago in regards to how we see the role of SOCO, especially reflecting back on what SEDCO used to be. And I would suggest that it's a piece of legislation that certainly needs further debate as we look into it. It needs to be looked at more in depth as we digest what the proposals are and determine whether or not, at the end of the day, this is going to be a piece of legislation that is beneficial to the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan.

And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 12 — The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Repeal Act

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to move second reading of Bill No. 12, The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Repeal Act. The Act was created in 1957 to solicit, receive, and hold gifts and donations for the University of Saskatchewan, a corporation created for charitable purposes. It was created in 1957 because some tax laws of our country were different than they are today.

The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act was legislated at a time when a foundation structure was necessary for donors to receive a tax benefit for their gifts to the university. This is no longer the case. Canadian universities are now treated as charitable organizations for tax purposes. So, Mr. Speaker, the

foundation itself has become redundant. The majority of individuals and corporations wanting to support the university already give their gifts or donations directly to the institution itself, not to the foundation, and the costs associated with running the foundation are therefore spent unnecessarily.

The foundation is governed by trustees and the Act requires them to meet at least annually. These meetings, along with other administrative items such as the development of financial statements, have proven to be costly. They are an inefficient use of time and resources of the foundation's officers and the trustees themselves agree that the foundation is no longer necessary or desirable.

The effect of repealing The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act, Mr. Speaker, would be to eliminate an existing inefficiency within the university structure. The university's board of governors is currently responsible for many trusts and donations. It holds and administers this money and ensures their use for the best possible advantage of the University of Saskatchewan students. And we certainly have no reason to believe that this accountability would diminish if The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act were eliminated.

Accordingly we are proposing an Act which would repeal The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act, provide for the wind-up of the foundation, and provide for the transfer of future bequests and donations. The new Act would appoint as trustees the chancellor, the president, the Chair of the board of governors of the University of Saskatchewan, and the president of the university alumni association.

These trustees shall be charged with the winding-up and the proper transfer of the foundation's responsibilities. They will take all steps to notify the public that the foundation will be wound up, and after the debts are properly paid, the trustees will transfer all remaining assets to the University of Saskatchewan.

The foundation now holds just one trust, valued at approximately one-half million dollars. Section 17 of the existing Act allows for the transfer of assets on the winding-up of the foundation. And certainly the conditions outlined in the donation will not change with the transfer. And I think I'll just skip a couple of pages here.

Once the transfer is completed, the University of Saskatchewan Foundation will be considered wound up, and the rights, obligations, and liabilities will be transferred to the University of Saskatchewan.

All of the objectives of the foundation can more efficiently be dealt with as part of the overall University of Saskatchewan's administration by transferring the foundation's assets to the university. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask for the support of the legislature for The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Repeal Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It would be in order for the minister to move the motion.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh, I move this Bill, second reading,

Bill No. 12.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by indicating a little bit more on what the minister has already raised because I think it's important for people in Saskatchewan and members here in the House to understand the reasons for this Bill.

The minister has indicated, of course, that The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act was created in 1957 and was the vehicle that many people used to ensure that there was a receipt that could be used for tax purposes.

When the individuals though, started to look at the limit, and we all are subjected to that same limit of 20 per cent donations to the charitable organizations, I think what was recognized by the board of governors at the University of Saskatchewan is that there was a need to create an expansion to that.

And as a result, I believe it was in 1994, the change occurred at the University of Saskatchewan to create The U of S (University of Saskatchewan) Crown Foundation Act, and that allowed, for a very brief period of time, it allowed additional donations to be made to a Crown foundation and to be subjected — or subject to different regulations and rules.

But I think we understand very well that the Minister of Finance federally, made some changes to the Income Tax Act and as a result, actually placed, not only charitable institutions like the University of Saskatchewan and Crown foundations like the U of S Crown Foundation Act, on a level playing-field, if I can use that.

So really, today there is no advantage to anyone to actually donate the money to the foundation or to donate it directly to the University of Saskatchewan.

As indicated by the minister, the trustees that will be involved in winding down the foundation Act will be the president of the University of Saskatchewan. So I gave a call, I made a call to Dr. George Ivany to indicate . . . to find out what he felt was necessary in the Bill and whether the Bill was meeting their needs.

And his concern was not so much of what the Bill was doing — that is was necessary; it was requested by the university — but he did indicate that the section that we're looking at, I believe it's section no. 4, it talks about the transfer of . . . first of all, the payment of the debts that the foundation may have currently on its books or may be subjected to pay and then, as a result, the assets that will be left over.

And the clause that's in the Bill currently indicates that the assets will be transferred directly to the University of Saskatchewan not to the University of Saskatchewan's Crown Foundation, which is the other foundation that is current. And of course his explanation was that — very similar to the minister — that there isn't a large number of trusts that are caught up in this, in this procedure right now. And I think the minister's indicated that there's only one.

So that type of handling of that particular account can be done directly to the University of Saskatchewan rather than to the

foundation.

(1145)

The concern though was in the area of future bequests. And there may be wills that are established already by individuals across the province who are willing to, in their wills, to leave a sum of money to the University of Saskatchewan. And section no. 5 indicates that that money, even though it may say The University of Saskatchewan Foundation Act — the old Act — will automatically mean once this comes into force, that the Crown Foundation will be the recipient.

And it stills seems a little confusing, I think, that people of Saskatchewan currently who have had a trust in the name of the foundation will have those assets transferred directly to the University of Saskatchewan. Yet future bequests that may fall into the hands of the university will, as a result of the amendments that are being proposed, will fall into the hands of the Crown Foundation.

Now that's not a serious problem, and I'd suggest to the minister that that kind of explanation is necessary, is necessary to explain to the people of Saskatchewan as to how that will transpire.

This Bill, I think, will eliminate a level of administration as indicated by another gentleman I spoke to at the university, Matt Webster, who says that currently, as indicated by the minister, there is a level of administration there that is now redundant. It's not needed. I think that's beneficial — to remove something that is not necessary at the moment and to ensure that we can maybe improve in terms of efficiencies.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments regarding some concerns that have been raised by the presidents and by Mr. Webster, I think that the minister and her officials will be able to handle those comments in committee and I would support moving the Bill to committee.

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

Bill No. 13 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to give second reading to Bill No. 13, An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act. This amendment primarily introduces an important new regulatory tool to the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

I want to emphasize at the outset that the vast majority of liquor and gaming participants take their responsibilities very seriously. They adhere to the regulations in place for the protection of the public — for example, the prohibition against serving liquor to minors. The enforcement options and the amendments I am proposing will be addressed to a small minority.

As you may be aware, Mr. Speaker, the Authority presently has a limited array of options for enforcing liquor and gaming regulations in our province. The Authority can issue a letter of

warning. It can repeat the warning more severely. It can suspend a gaming participant or liquor permit for several days, meaning that a business cannot operate. It can issue another suspension for a longer period of time. The ultimate sanction at its disposal is to cancel the authorization altogether.

These penalties are administered on a case-by-case basis depending on the severity of the offence and the regulatory record of the business. These options are usually effective in achieving compliance from the responsible parties as a closed business results in lost profits, something most businesses prefer to avoid. However, when offences do occur and these sanctions are imposed, there are some indirect consequences. This amendment addresses these concerns.

When a hospitality business is forced to close for several days the owner loses profits, as intended by the sanction. However, the staff of the establishment also suffer. Through no fault of their own, they cannot work during the shut-down and will lose wages. In the case of charity gaming establishments, charities lose revenues when a gaming supplier is suspended as their fund-raising efforts are interrupted. In each case, employees and charities are adversely affected through no fault of their own.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, allows the Liquor and Gaming Authority to use an additional different tool, a tool which allows it to enforce the liquor and gaming regulations in the province while avoiding consequences for pay cheques and for charity revenues.

It introduces the option of fining businesses found to be in breach of the regulations rather than suspending them. In paying a fine, the business owner is still penalized, however, the business stays open and the employees and charities can continue to work and raise the funds they need. I say that this is only another enforcement tool, Mr. Speaker, because there will obviously still be many circumstances where suspension or cancellation of a permit or registration is the only proper recourse.

The Authority generally allows a progressive course in sanctioning liquor establishments and gaming suppliers for breaches of regulations depending on the severity of the offence. The first sanction may be a letter of warning, the second may be a short suspension, the third may be a longer suspension, and the fourth, perhaps the cancellation. The levying of a fine will generally be considered in cases where only the lightest reprimand, a letter of warning, has been issued in the past to the establishment or to the supplier.

If a supplier or establishment has a record which indicates continued breaches of regulations, a fine may not be considered a sufficient sanction. By introducing the options of fines, the Authority will have greater leeway to deal with instances where a breach of the regulations has occurred but a suspension is seen to be out of proportion to that offence. This will help to protect hospitality industry jobs and charity profits for gaming fund-raisers in the case of less severe breaches of the regulations while holding the responsible party accountable. It also ensures that severe offences are still punishable by other severe sanctions such as long suspensions or cancellations.

The option of fining offenders has existed for many years in the

legislation surrounding horse-racing industry in this province, so this new initiative brings the gaming and liquor regulations into greater harmony. It also brings Saskatchewan into greater harmony with other provinces, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories presently allows the levying of fines for liquor regulation violations, and Alberta and North . . . New Brunswick, I should say, allow it for both liquor and gaming. British Columbia is also moving in this direction.

The amendment suggests that the Authority may levy a fine of up to \$10,000 and set a date by which the fine must be paid. If a fine is not paid after that time, a period of suspension for the permit or registration would occur. Of course some protection has been built into the amendment as well for the responsible party.

A business facing a fine would be provided the same right of appeal presently allowed to those facing suspension, an appeal to the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission and ultimately to the courts. The Authority also agrees not to assess a penalty for an offence which came to its attention more than three years ago.

Our hospitality industry and the charity stakeholders have asked for this legislative change, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to introduce the second reading for it today. I believe this amendment will help keep Saskatchewan's workforce and charities in the black while still ensuring that the laws and regulations surrounding liquor and gaming in the province are heeded and enforced.

Before I close I want to briefly describe one additional amendment in the Bill, a housekeeping matter really. The amendment allows the Authority, through regulation, to exempt specific permittees from having to purchase wine and beer directly from the Authority's stores or its franchises. This amendment provides these permittees with the opportunity to purchase wine and beer from permittees which . . . with, I should say, off-sale endorsements.

Consequently it will be easier for many permittees to make these purchases as they will no longer be required to travel sometimes considerable distances to the Authority's stores. This is a positive addition to the Authority's Act for a number of permittees across the province.

I ask members of the Assembly to support this Act, and I therefore move second reading of Bill No. 13, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 1998.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill No. 13, the liquor and gaming regulations Act. I'm not sure if this is the appropriate number because a good many people consider no. 13 to be an unlucky number particularly when you're dealing with a gaming issue, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Well we're not gamblers over here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well that's true. There are a lot of gamblers on that side, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Rosetown says.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that I think needs to be brought forward in this particular piece of legislation is the appeals process for fines. I think it's very important that appeals process be put in place.

The question I guess we have to ask is to whom does a complainant appeal? Do they appeal to the Liquor Authority or is it some body outside of the Liquor Authority to whom you would make that appeal. Because you can't have someone appealing to the person who just made a ruling against you — it has to be to some other body. So I think it's very important to ensure that the appeals process would be outside of the Liquor and Gaming Authority.

Now, Mr. Speaker, previously the Authority would suspend licences for even minor offences. And indeed as the minister said, that put a great burden on the employees and on the innocent victims . . . (inaudible) . . . a charity situation, on the people who were trying to run the charities and to raise funds for their particular functions, Mr. Speaker.

Likewise with the gaming licence suspensions, bingo halls as I mentioned, that causes a great deal of concern to those groups like figure-skating, or the Boy Scouts, or whomever may be running a bingo at a charity hall if that hall is for some reason shut down. That causes them a great deal of difficulty. And I believe this piece of legislation will help to deal with that and we would support that, Mr. Speaker.

The amount of the fines of up to \$10,000 is a significant fine, Mr. Speaker. I realize that other jurisdictions perhaps have more, but to go from no fine process to a \$10,000 fine process can be of considerable impact for those particular organizations that may be involved.

The minister went on at some length to rationalize the actions that could happen within the bingo community and the charities. And it's true that charities shouldn't be penalized for the actions of bingo hall owners. But the reverse is also true, Mr. Speaker. The government's lengthy legal analysis concludes that it's almost impossible to levy fines against charities. So if a fine is to be laid at all, it will be held against the facility owners or anyone else who is offering the charities technical support for gaming.

If this is the Authority's intention, it's clearly unfair, and we will be questioning that fairly extensively in committee, Mr. Speaker. If the government can't fine the charities for their own offences, then they shouldn't go looking for somebody else to be the scapegoat. Because we have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that fines are simply another term for taxation.

The comments that the minister made on the change, the amendment to where someone providing off-sale or serving liquor, buying their off-sale, I think is very important. And that is a worthwhile change to this particular Act. Because in some communities there is no liquor franchise for a group to purchase their liquor from that particular place. They have to go down the road to the next community or a few communities down the road. If they could support their own local businesses, such as the local hotel, and purchase their supplies from that particular off-sale outlet is of benefit, Mr. Speaker, to everyone in Saskatchewan.

Because we do have a number of concerns and a number of questions — there are charities that are concerned about this; the hotel people have some concerns about this — at this present time, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

(1200)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Justice

Vote 3

The Chair: — I will ask first the minister to introduce his officials please.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have with me today John Whyte, who is the deputy minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General; Doug Moen, who is the executive director of public law and community justice; Colleen Matthews, who is the executive assistant to the deputy minister; Elizabeth Smith, who is the director of the administrative services branch; Richard Quinney, who is the executive director of the public prosecutions branch.

At the back I have John Baker, executive director of law enforcement services; Keith Laxdal, who is the associate deputy minister of finance, administration division; Terry Lang, who is with corrections; and Ron Hewitt, who is assistant deputy minister of registry services division.

Subvote (JU01)

Mr. Heppner: — Good morning, Mr. Minister, and a welcome to your officials as well. One of the first things that shows up is that your staff complement I believe has increased by 40, and I'm wondering first of all where specifically those people are located and what exactly has been going on that requires that increased staffing

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay, the question is about the increase of full-time equivalent positions, and I will go through and give you the explanation. Effectively what it is, is an increase of 44.5 full-time equivalent positions as well as a reduction of four full-time equivalent positions.

Public prosecutions, there are 17 new positions in the sense that there are 10 new positions and then there's permanent funding for 7 existing positions that we have been managing. Under the prosecutions, well in the whole initiative that we have around building safer communities in Saskatchewan, there are 14.2 positions. Of these, prosecutions, 4.5; corrections, 5.2; family violence, orders and issues around that, 1 position; communications department, 3.5 positions. Within the court structure, there are 2 traditional officer positions; at the Office of the Rentalsman, 4.7 positions.

The LAND (Land Titles automated network development) project which is the renewal and development of a new land titles system, there are 4 positions. Under the police administration part of the department, 1 position; at the

Securities Commission, there's 1 position; and the coroner's department, there's a .6 position. The decreases are in the area of gun control. The people that we've had employed doing that will no longer be doing that function once the federal government takes over. At the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board, there's 1 less position there as well.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and I guess there's three of those that I'd like to have some further comment on. The first one is you mentioned that there's an increase in the component for the Rentalsman, and I'd like to know exactly what's been happening in that department that requires an increase.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well as you will know, effective October 1, 1997, the limit on the amount of a security deposit was eliminated and we used to have a maximum of \$125 as a security deposit. As part of that change of allowing security deposits up to one month, we also changed a number of the provisions relating to the return of the security deposit in a timely fashion from landlords, who held those, back to tenants.

As part of that process of reorganization, it did include more involvement of the Rentalsman's office in the process. And so as a result, we have increased the number of people who are involved in dealing with some of the issues around the larger security deposits that are charged.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, I have a further question on that one. Is this a situation that's going to be ongoing or is it just something that's here till we get the system working? The next question, I believe you had 3.5 more people in communications. Exactly what is their responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to your question is that there's a very large public education component in the Justice department. As you know there are just about almost 2,000 employees. What we're looking at in the new set-up is to have people available to work at coordinating the information about a number of the new programs. We also have a substantial amount of correspondence that comes to the department on many of the issues that you're well aware of, and that involves some more staff there.

But basically the answer is that throughout the Department of Justice there are many programs, many new kinds of things that are being dealt with that require more explanation and this is part of the communications budget.

Mr. Heppner: — So as I asked earlier on about the Rentalsman, that's a new area, and you mentioned there's some new programs coming out here. What have you put into place to ensure that these jobs do not become long-term jobs even when the programs have been introduced and are running?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the answer there is that there are a total of now seven people within the whole Department of Justice that are involved in all of these areas. And it would be our plan that those people would continue in the work, because it's an ongoing process to respond to the questions of the public, provide appropriate information as needed, deal with many of the concerns that I know that you raise and others raise, and that the plan would be that these people would continue in their positions.

Mr. Heppner: — Well, Mr. Minister, that's an interesting answer. Because first of all you said that you needed more people in Rentalsman because that was new. Then you said there are more new programs on here but that these people are going to stay around once those new programs have been introduced and are there.

It seems like that's a bit of a make-work project, and I'm not sure that at the end of the day some of that money probably couldn't be used better in your Justice department than just to say they introduced a new program back in 1997, back in 1998, but they're still there. And we're not quite sure what, but we've managed to go ahead and make sure that the work that was there expanded itself to give something for everyone to do.

You may want to comment on that, but my next question is I would like to know really quite specifically what areas are covered by sentencing circles or community justice committees. What sorts of crimes, if you wish to use that term, are they allowed to deal with?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'll respond to your question about the communications department and I think you're misunderstanding my answer. Basically we've been working with not enough resources in that particular area and we've increased those resources to the need of the public for more information about the kinds of things that are being dealt with in the Justice department. And that's everything right through from Rentalsman, Securities Commission, to the land title's issues, the victim services program to all of the issues surrounding the courts, policing. And we've been operating with less than the total number that were needed in that area.

As far as your question about sentencing circles, but I think really the gist of your questions relates to alternative measures programs, various kinds of things that are dealt with that way.

There is a Saskatchewan Justice diversion program policy which was set out in 1996 effectively for some of these diversion programs. The criteria are this. For an offender, it's an adult offender, there has to be sufficient evidence existing to support the criminal charge. Prosecution can't be brought barred at law. There has to be some acknowledgement of responsibility for the behaviour on behalf of the person that the complaint's been made about. There can't have been diversions more than twice in the last three years.

In other words, you don't get a lot chances at this alternate measures program. You can't have a failed diversion in the last six months, and there can't be a substantial record of similar offences or recent charges.

(1215)

Offences that are totally excluded from the alternative measures program, and I think this is maybe more specifically where your question is raised, is any offence that involves the use or threatened use of a weapon; any violence against a person; cases adult or child where the Crown elects to proceed by way of indictment; child sexual abuse cases — they're excluded; sexual assault cases where the Crown elects to proceed by way of indictment are excluded; perjury cases are excluded; driving while disqualified excluded; Criminal Code driving offences

where alcohol was a contributing factor are excluded; federal offences other than certain Criminal Code offences, and the federal Department of Justice has their own lists of some of these federal offences which are excluded; and family violence cases are excluded from the alternative measures program.

And then in addition to that policy, there are eight criteria for sentencing circles that are set out in the case law in Saskatchewan: Provincial Court Judge Fafard in the *R. v. Joseyounen* case and Mr. Justice Grotzky in the *R. v. Cheekinev* case, which was subsequently affirmed in another case, *R. v. Moran*.

And the criteria as set out in those cases are as follows, and there are eight points which I'll read to you:

1. The accused must agree to be referred to the sentencing circle.
2. The accused must have deep roots in the community in which the circle is held and from which the participants are drawn.
3. That there are elders or respected non-political community leaders willing to participate.
4. The victim is willing to participate and has been subjected to no coercion or pressure in so agreeing.
5. The court should try to determine beforehand as best it can if the victim is subject to battered spouse syndrome.
6. Disputed facts have been resolved in advance.
7. The case is one in which a court would be willing to take a calculated risk and depart from the usual range of sentencing.
8. The judge must agree to order a sentencing circle.

Mr. Heppner: — Probably a comment on a specific. If you picked up today's Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, and you probably have, you've seen the article there on page A3 about the police charge a banished rapist in new assaults. It seems rather interesting when I think I followed through the list of situations that would qualify a person for a sentencing circle or keep them off a sentencing circle, it seems rather interesting that this individual was allowed into that situation for that banishment thing because it doesn't seem to fit that category.

I just wonder if you care to comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Since these new charges are before the court I can't comment on the facts. Mr. Taylor's previous contacts with the law are well documented in the news media. And the Department of Justice appealed his previous sentence of banishment suggesting that that sentence was inappropriate given the circumstances. The Court of Appeal disagreed with the appeal made by the Crown and upheld his original sentence.

Mr. Heppner: — I think it's this sort of thing that we're just talking about now that puts the thing a bit into question. And one of the questions I have is what security does the public have with regards to people who go through things such as community justice committees or sentencing circles that he

doesn't leave that particular community because it's that community that he's in that is involved in this system.

Now if he's not being incarcerated, what is there in place to ensure that he stays within that community on a physical basis and isn't allowed into a greater community, a community that had no say in his sentencing?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I can't comment specifically on the situation before the court today, but on the previous charge that I think you're asking the question about, he would have been out of regular sentence at a prison in any case by today's date.

I think that what you've identified is a concern for all of us in Saskatchewan, in Canada, or North America, which is recidivism. How do you stop people from committing a crime again? And there are many, many concerns around this and practically, what we know is that there are many things that we do both within the traditional or within the correctional system within . . . and also within some of the alternative measures programs that we get involved with.

And so in this whole area we continue to work to try to find the best solutions that will emphasize that the public protection is of paramount importance, and that we will make sure that people have the best chances that they can to sort out their problems so that when they do return to the community, they become contributing members of society rather than people who commit another crime.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I think I'll have to rephrase that question to get exactly where I'm at. If a community justice committee or a sentencing circle deals with an individual, he isn't necessarily incarcerated. They may decide to give him whatever sentence they choose within the criteria that they are allowed to work.

So you had a certain segment of society has said, this is what we're going to do with this individual; he can stay living here. Now that doesn't provide any kind of protection for the rest of society within this province that had absolutely no input into that. In the justice system the justice system is suppose to take care of all of society. Here you have a small segment of society making decisions. This individual, whoever it happens to be, past, present or future, may be a threat to the larger society and yet they have no recourse.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think I do understand your question. Then I think the issue is one that's a problem for all societies when you have behaviour which is antisocial or deviant. And I think your question revolves around what kinds of methods we use as sanctions against individuals.

And specifically in situations where a sentencing circle model is used in Saskatchewan in conjunction with a judge, those sentences are no less tough. In some ways they are tougher than the sentences that might come out of the court process, in the sense that the individual is dealing with the people in their community that they've harmed. Often it's their relatives, their teacher, their priest, others who are part of that process, who end up holding the person accountable in a much more effective way often, than what would be more of an anonymous judge who is dealing with that particular situation. But then on top of

that, the judges do participate and affirm under our structure what the ultimate sentence is.

I think the bigger question and the one that I think is difficult to answer, is the question around people who have fulfilled their sentence, they return to the community, and they still end up for whatever reason, having the propensity towards creating more criminal activities.

And we in our society say that for most people, we'll have them serve their time and then come out into the community in a staged fashion which allows them to somehow reintegrate into the community. But we have to admit that isn't a hundred per cent effective and that there are some people that end up being more of a problem.

We do have certain people that are dangerous to the community that are designated that, and we end up then having the dangerous offender provisions under the Criminal Code, which we use those applications as well.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I would hope that the idea isn't coming through that I'm totally against sentencing circles. I think they have some key strong points, and the one that you addressed is probably one of the stronger ones, and that is that there is the victim involved. And I think that's a definite positive move where the victim feels they have some input into the sentencing, into the justice that takes place. So that's a good step. But we're still a little vague on the security for the larger community.

In conversation with several native people about sentencing circles, one of the problems that they've identified deals with keeping the offender in the community. And that's sort of what I was really referring to, in that they do not always have adequate policing. I'm wondering what measures are there now and what directions are you thinking of going in that area to make sure that that's addressed?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Is your specific question about policing in aboriginal communities? Well I think on that particular area, we in Saskatchewan are quite proud of our concern about public safety as we deal with policing through our tripartite agreements with the federal government and the first nations. And we have a broad network of policing arrangements within first nations communities, where rather than have the police come from outside of the first nations communities, many of them have their offices and their homes on the first nations and are providing policing with the assistance of local police advisory commissions and other things like this.

So that we're attempting to deal with some of the concerns that you've raised and I think that I can say that throughout the province we have developed a broad network of the tripartite policing agreements on the first nations situation.

Ms. Draude: — Welcome to the officials. I have a question, Mr. Minister, on a court case regarding a native issue that was actually ruled on regarding . . . in British Columbia. And I'm going to spell it because I can't say the word. D-E-L-G-A-M-U-U-K-Y-S. I'm sure you can probably tell me what it is.

I'm concerned, as I'm sure lots of people are, about this case and how it may affect the land claims that have actually been settled or supposedly settled here in Saskatchewan because of determining the aboriginal title, and also the term "shared exclusivity" and how it might affect some of the treaty land entitlement cases here in Saskatchewan. Can you give me some information on that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I appreciate this question. How you say that word is "Del-ga-mook." Delgamuukys case. And it's the case involving the Nishga in north-western British Columbia.

I think the key thing to remember for all of Saskatchewan residents is that we have treaties covering our whole province. And that's completely different than British Columbia. The only treaty in British Columbia is way up in the north-east corner. Otherwise they are dealing with situations that have never been resolved through a treaty.

Now we have outstanding obligations under our treaties in Saskatchewan and we are working to fulfil those, but we don't have the same kinds of issues that relate to the aboriginal title as arose in the Delgamuukys case.

Ms. Draude: — I'm also interested . . . At the same time, the judge had decided that oral evidence could be given and used in different cases. And I'm wondering if this will affect any of the other cases that you may be dealing with right now?

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to that is yes, it will affect some of the cases in that the Supreme Court of Canada set out guidelines around the use of oral-tradition evidence, and so practically that will affect how some of the cases that we may have in Saskatchewan in the future will be dealt with.

Ms. Draude: — So at the present time, are there cases that are being dealt with that this will have an impact on that is beyond what the budget is for or planned for when the settlements were made?

I understand that even the bands that have settled their land claims right now haven't been required to completely release . . . to give releases. And so if there's a new type of . . . something new will come up like giving oral history, that it might actually change the way it'll be dealt with. Are there cases like this ongoing at this time?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think practically, it's hard to predict exactly how evidence might unfold. One of the things that we do know in Saskatchewan, as various cases have developed in the courts, that the judges have used their discretion to make sure that they get the best evidence that they can before the courts.

What this particular Delgamuukys case does is talk in more detail about the kinds of information that were excluded by some of the lower courts in British Columbia in that particular case.

It's not totally obvious that the same thing would have happened in Saskatchewan if there had been a similar case here. But I think practically, what we will do is take the suggestions, the ideas, and the rules, such as they are, out of that particular case and, you know, argue around the cases that we do have in Saskatchewan.

And so practically, once again I say the answer to your question is yes, that it will have some effect. As to the specific effect, I can't say for sure.

Ms. Draude: — At this time are you concerned that the term that was used by the judge in that case, of "shared exclusivity," is that going to have an effect on the cases that you're dealing with now, and can actually claims be reopened to include that term?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Our position is that that term will not affect how the treaties are interpreted and that were protected here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I'd like to change gears a little bit and get a bit of background on just the legal process so that we're comfortable with what's going to be taking place here, in the next few questions. If a person has a chance of being called as a witness in a trial, would they be allowed to sit on the jury hearing that particular trial?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. It's good to get a nice, short, concise answer so we know where we're going.

Okay, what if we just change that scenario somewhat and we say there's a public inquiry that's in process, would a person who is a potential witness be allowed to hear the testimony?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think you're asking a fairly complicated question, but the answer is there are circumstances where witnesses may be present at an inquiry and not excluded, if that's your question.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, so I believe what you've told us then is that potential witness could hear the testimony.

Now in a legislative inquiry, as we move down this ladder, in your opinion as a Justice minister and as a member of the legal profession — you should have this nicely in hand — hypothetically, would it be proper for members of this House who may be called to give a testimony before a committee of this legislature to also sit as members of that committee — hypothetically?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — A simple answer to your question is that this legislature controls its own procedure.

Mr. Heppner: — So you feel that it is totally acceptable for the person to be both the judge and the person who is being questioned in a situation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I didn't say that. I said that the House controls its own procedure.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Would you be . . . say that a potential witness should be allowed to be part of a jury process?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No. It's clear that a witness would not be on a jury.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. We believe the member from Regina Dewdney and the member from Regina north-west must be called as witnesses before the Crown Corporations Committee, the hearing into the Channel Lakes. In your opinion and from your legal background, should they not immediately step down from that committee?

The Chair: — Order. Order. I'm going to intervene here. I think these questions are not for the Department of Justice and are committee questions. We are into the estimates for the Department of Justice, and I don't think these questions are in line for that. I will not require the minister to answer it.

Mr. Heppner: — I'm asking the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Justice for this province, for a legal opinion.

The Chair: — The opinion of the Chair cannot be challenged and the Chair has made the ruling on it. If the hon. member from Rosthern wishes to continue his questioning on the estimates of Justice, he may do so.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a point of order. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask a question of the Chair and a clarification.

It seems to me that the committee before the Assembly this morning is the Justice estimates. And when you start talking about whether it was Justice or Social Services or Health estimates, there are wide-ranging questions that deal with process — process — and I'm asking, Mr. Chairman, whether or not this is a limitation of the ability of the members to seek some guidance and get some information and seek the direction as to how the Justice department continues and represents decisions and concerns of individuals in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I would expect that members would know that they cannot argue with the Chair. There is a procedure whereby you may ask that the Speaker confirm the ruling, but you cannot argue with the Chair. This is clearly out of order.

An Hon. Member: — In your view.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In the rules of the House.

The Chair: — Order. The Chair has ruled on it, and the point of order as risen by the member from Moosomin is out of order and the ruling will stand. These are not relevant questions, I don't believe, to the Department of Justice finances. Now questioning will continue or we will call the vote on administration subvote (JU01).

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Well, we'll just go back to a different question then and we'll see if we can come back to where this

province wants us to be at.

I see in the *Estimates* that the money as allocated for community justice involve the coroner investigations. We find that there's members of families in this province who are having to wait a very long time for coroners' reports, and that has a number of difficulties that are involved there. One is it really elongates the grieving process, which is unfortunate; the other thing is, if it involves car accidents and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), they need the coroners' reports before they will compensate the family.

And I'm wondering how much of any new money is allocated to coroner's office and what is the average wait for reports that are being produced for that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's no new money for the coroner's office, but I think the specific concern that you have relates to the length of time that the coroners have to wait for receiving the final reports from the pathologist. And so it's a question that relates to the medical doctors who are specifically trained to do those kinds of reports and the length of time that it sometimes takes to complete those reports.

Mr. Heppner: — On the same issue, what is the average waiting time at present for a coroner's report, and what actions have been taken to try and speed that up for some very good reasons?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The specific question of the average length of time for coroner's report, I'll have to take specific notice of that because we don't have that figure calculated out, but we can do that based on the dates of the reports. What I would say is that the pathologists' reports are taking an average of four to six months to be returned to the coroners; the pathologists are employees of the health districts throughout the province.

Mr. Heppner: — Dealing with the young offenders and a few questions in that area. Legal service expenditures is up, I believe 1.67 million in that area. This money is utilized, among several things, for the prosecution of young offenders. And the first question is, I know that the Department of Social Services administers the Young Offenders Act, but can you explain to me how much support, financial or otherwise, comes from the Department of Justice?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think I can clarify for you that the Department of Justice is involved in the prosecution of matters under the Young Offenders Act, so that those issues would be dealt with under expenses related to policing and to prosecutions and to Legal Aid. But they're not specifically broken out from that. And also then, as it relates to the various discussions around the changes that we've proposed to the Young Offenders Act, those things are dealt with in our public policy part of the Department of Justice. But they're not specifically broken out as so many hours on young offenders in the whole process.

I think the Department of Social Services is the department which deals with the various services for young people under the Young Offenders Act.

Mr. Heppner: — What components of the Young Offenders Act have you basically given over or have they taken over, the Social Services part? What components are they responsible for?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Social Services is responsible for the corrections component of the Young Offenders Act. We worked together on the social policy side of it.

Mr. Heppner: — This, in the last number of months as you know, has been a fairly critical issue in that Social Services' number one mandate is definitely not protection of the public. And yet you will take a young offender, and after the research and the conviction has taken place, Social Services gets them. But as I just finished saying, protection of the public is not part of what they see as a key mandate of theirs but it is in your department. And I'm wondering . . . I'd like to get your comments on why you don't take over the full responsibility for all of the Young Offenders Act.

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well the specific policy reasons around that in Saskatchewan and in other provinces in Canada is specific emphasis on youth, a separate justice system for youth, which is the whole young offenders system. What we know is that the Department of Social Services has responsibilities around the aspects of young people as it specifically relates to the Young Offenders Act, but they also have responsibility as it relates to children in need of protection.

And unfortunately often those responsibilities overlap in Saskatchewan and in a number of other provinces in Canada that concern for children has dictated that what we set up in this way. And as we've done it for a long time this way and it's worked, I think relatively well in meeting the needs of children.

And we also, though, are clearly cognizant of the concerns about public safety. And as you know from the information that we have conveyed to the federal Justice minister over the last number of years. One of the concerns about actually how the Young Offenders Act is written is that the whole goal of protection of the public has been de-emphasized in how the federal government wrote that legislation.

And I would just remind you that that legislation was introduced by Prime Minister Mulroney, a Conservative government in the '80s, and it was sort of through the consultation with the Premier Devine government in Saskatchewan during the '80s. So it's basically federal Tory, provincial Tory legislation.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Minister, it's totally amazing how you're scampering for cover behind a bunch of PCs (Progressive Conservative). I think that kind of indicates where your government happens to be at. But that doesn't address the questions in the '90s.

It doesn't address the question of the '90s when we see the differences that have been happening with youth crime across North America, and Saskatchewan's been no exception. You're still not addressing the issue of what your department is doing to provide more security for the public from young offenders.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well as you have so clearly pointed out in your initial questions — and I appreciate those questions — we are increasing the budget in Justice. We are specifically looking at serious habitual young offenders. And we're looking and promoting reform of the federal legislation, which we have been working on for a number of years, and we are providing increased coordination throughout the province with policing.

And I guess what I would beg to differ with your perception that we're not concerned about this, because we are . . . have public safety as our number one goal; and as it relates to the increased concern, as you rightly pointed out, in Saskatchewan but also across North America, we have some specific problems to deal with with our young people and we are taking steps to deal with those.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Minister, not very long ago when the North Battleford situation came up, you said at that point you were quite satisfied with the Young Offenders Act. Then a little later on you said, well you and your federal counterpart were chatting about it. Now you're telling me you've been working on this for years.

Could you pick one of those three this morning and tell us which one you're really in?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I've now been Justice minister for two and a half years, and I would tell you that this item of the Young Offenders Act has been on every agenda of ministers' meetings over the last few years. And I know that it was there when my predecessor was the minister.

I would like to take this opportunity to specifically correct some of the misinformation that you as a member have been providing to Saskatchewan about my role in December in Montreal. What happened at that meeting was that there were four provinces that came forward with a proposal which they laid on the table without any prior knowledge.

The common response — and you can read all of the information that came out of that meeting — of all the provinces was to say there are some good ideas here. We haven't had a chance to review them. How we develop policy is to look at things, go back, discuss with our colleagues, come forward with positions.

Out of that particular meeting and out of those suggestions we then worked through the various policy parts of our department and we came forward with the letter that we've sent to the Minister of Justice which sets out the concerns that we have that should be included in any changes to the Young Offenders Act.

Those changes are ones that are based on quite a number of years of discussion and negotiation through the process that we in Canada have for changing our criminal law. As you know, the federal government has responsibility for creating criminal law. And the net effect of that is, is that all of the provinces and territories participate through federal-provincial-territorial meetings where policy issues around the criminal law are discussed. We have been participants in that around changes to the Criminal Code and also changes as it relates to the Young Offenders Act.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I would have appreciated it if you had all that knowledge at your disposal that people of Saskatchewan would have known about it, they might have felt a bit more confidence in what was happening in the youth area.

And meanwhile, it's interesting that the people from Lloydminster is chirping back there about people listening. I would suggest she needs to listen to some of the questions happening in the House. Things would work along a whole better for her when she goes home this weekend.

How much extra money is being allocated, Mr. Minister, to alleviate the backlog in Land Titles Offices? There is traditionally a number of weeks of time that people have to wait for that, and I'm wondering what is the average length of time? And I believe you're making some changes in that and what are those changes?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The specific increase for the land titles department in this budget is \$600,000. But I think that you should recognize that we're in a position where we're moving to our new land system and so we're still using a paper-based system that's basically a hundred years old. And we're doing everything we can to make sure that we serve the public as quickly as possible.

Right now our response, I guess as of April 2, which is earlier this week — if you want I can go through and tell you what the numbers of days of turnaround are. These are calendar days as opposed to work days and if I . . . I guess the Saskatoon area and Saskatoon mid-west is 7 days, so that means if it goes in on a Monday, it comes out the next Monday; Swift Current, 10 days; Yorkton, 8 days; Regina area is at 13 days which . . . just under 2 weeks; Prince Albert, 9 days; Moose Jaw, 13 days; Humboldt, 9 days; Battleford, 8 days; Yorkton, 8 days.

So basically our goal is to get them turned around as quickly as possible with making sure that we continue to maintain the high quality and standards that we have for our land titles system and we are putting the extra money that we need to do that and we monitor this on a weekly basis.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and as a lay person that's had to wait numerous times for different land title offices, usually it's been in the numbers that you've talked about — 9, 12, 13, in there some place — and it seems that the Land Titles Office at Prince Albert, for example, you said had 9 days. And it never seems to get down to 3 or 4, but it usually stays around 9, 10, 11, 12. And I guess a simple question from a person who just uses it is: can't we just get caught up at some point and say it's always 2 to 3 days? Like, why are we always that extra number of days behind?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm very pleased you asked that question because I gave you the figure for April 2, and in Prince Albert office it was 9 days which is quite a bit longer than normal for there. But what happened . . . well basically I'll . . . March 5. I'll give you the weekly totals for the last five weeks: March 5, 1 day turn-around; March 12, 1 day; March 19, 3 days; March 26, 7 days; April 2, 9 days. So what happened in Prince Albert?

Well Prince Albert experienced some computer problems

around some power outages that happened, and they're doing some training of staff, as well as there's been an accumulation of staff taking some leave around this time. They'll be back to full compliment of staff on April 6, which I guess was a couple of days ago, and it's anticipated that they'll bring those numbers back down to the one, two, three days amounts that they had earlier in March.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's in . . .

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I ask that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — It now being near the hour of adjournment, along with wishes to all hon. members that you'll take advantage of the extended Christmas break — excuse — the extended Easter break. Ain't it amazing how time flies when you're having a good time?

Please enjoy the Easter break, and this House will now stand adjourned until Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.

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