

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a presentation on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are from the community of Gainsborough. I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

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 continue.

These petitions come from the Redvers, Gainsborough, Wakaw, Stockholm areas of the province, Manor, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, with petitions as well to present to this Assembly 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.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitions here are signed by individuals from the Redvers, Antler, Wakaw, Storthoaks, Carievale area of the province. I so present.

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

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 Channel Lake's fiasco.

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

The community involved with the petition, Mr. Speaker, the community of Melfort. I so present.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. I too rise 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's fiasco.

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

And these come from people in Porcupine Plain and Carragana. I so present.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

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.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the Melfort area.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today from the people of Spalding.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays 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.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have a petition to present to the Assembly this morning surrounding the issue of Jack Messer and the Channel Lake situation. I am pleased to present on behalf of the residents of Prince Albert this petition comes from. And I so submit.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition regarding the Plains hospital.

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 signatures on this petition are from the city of Weyburn. Of course, that's where I will be next week, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Order. The hon. member of course, will want to avoid debating while presenting petitions. And I'll recognize the next petitioner.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present a petition, and the petition 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 signed this particular petition are primarily from the community of Big Beaver, and I so present.

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

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

Those who've signed this petition are from the communities of Swift Current, Gravelbourg, Regina, and a number from Assiniboia. I so present.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

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 the people who signed this petition are from Estevan, Benson, and Lampman.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today and the people of Saskatchewan in their efforts in stopping the closure of the Plains hospital. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are from Aneroid in my constituency. I so present.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present the following petition:

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.

These all come from the community of Cabri, Saskatchewan, and I'm happy to present them on their behalf.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters: the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; saving the Plains Health Centre; and calling an independent inquiry into the Channel Lake issue.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you I would like to introduce to you and to the House a visitor who is in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, who has come to view the proceedings of this legislature and is visiting here from Cloppenburg, Germany.

Bernd Tabeling is here to attend the 50th wedding anniversary of some relatives, Peter and Ella Thacyk, who are residents in my constituency. This is not the first time that Bernd has been in Saskatchewan. This is the third time. He enjoys coming to Canada and particularly coming to visit in Saskatchewan. I have had the pleasure to meet him.

He is seated in your gallery with another relative who's going to be — not my relative — but who's going to this anniversary, the cabinet secretary, Lois Thacyk. And I would like to ask members of the House to join me in extending to Bernd Tabeling, Willkommen.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, two people who are here in the gallery today. The first is my brother, Dr. Ralph Nilson, who is the dean of physical activity studies at the University of Regina, and we heard about him yesterday as the editor of the "Discover Saskatchewan" book *A*

*Guide to Historic Sites* and markers of Saskatchewan.

But today he's here with Juan Carlos Limon Lopez of the University Autonoma de Campeche in Mexico; he's from Campeche, Mexico, and Juan Carlos is a student in a program that has been organized by the University of Regina, the department of physical activity studies, that's a program for North American mobility in higher education with a specialization in ecotourism especially for those people who live in . . . out in marginal areas of North America.

And the other universities involved in this program are Arizona State University, Washington State University, University of Manitoba, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and then the University of Regina is the lead institution. Representatives from all of these schools will be in Regina May 21 to 25 talking about this program.

I'm especially pleased to welcome Juan Carlos here. Juan Carlos's grandfather was the governor of the state of Campeche from 1949 to 1954, and he has a special interest in politics and in political science as well as the ecotourism that he is studying.

Also I think we should all wish him well; he's returning to Mexico next week because he's going to be married on the first weekend in May. So welcome to Juan Carlos.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Saskatchewan Party Leadership

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by the time this House reconvenes on Monday afternoon the Saskatchewan Party will have a new leader — the next premier of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — The Saskatchewan Party has now received over 3,300 mail-in leadership ballots — the largest number of people ever to vote in a leadership in Saskatchewan's history.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Deputy Premier is pretty bitter these days as he watches his hopes of sitting in the Premier's chair sink into Channel Lake. And the other day he made some disparaging remarks about the number of people at our leadership convention. What he hasn't figured out yet is that we actually had over 3,300 people at our leadership convention. That's because our convention is taking place in every corner of Saskatchewan.

People attended leadership forums in their area, they listened to the candidate speeches on TV, and they were given the opportunity to cast their votes by mail — no matter where they live in the province. It's just another way the Saskatchewan Party is doing politics differently — taking our leadership convention to our members instead of making our members come to the convention.

Over 3,300 ballots have come in so far, and this clearly shows that Saskatchewan people like our new approach.

So, Mr. Speaker, Monday is going to be an even more exciting day when all these ballots are counted and the Saskatchewan Party announces our new leader and the next premier of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Good News Headlines

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me share, for the record, five good news headlines from Saskatchewan's weekly newspapers:

1. "Hwy #9 Wrecking open for business," *Carlyle Observer*, March 30, '98.
2. "Texas closing means Melville jobs at B&W," *Melville Advance*, March 25, 1998.
3. "Council 'hog wild' about pork barns," *Langenburg Four-Town Journal*, March 25, '98.
4. "New shop opens in Stoughton," *Carlyle Observer*, March 30, '98.
5. "District hog projects are right on schedule," *Kindersley Clarion*, March 25, '98.

These headlines have two things in common. They each introduce a story of economic development outside the major cities and they each occur in an opposition member's constituency.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that opposition members are not aware of the economic success stories in their own constituencies. On behalf of the government, I am delighted to share with them and to recognize the hard work and the successful work of many Saskatchewan people.

Thank you.

#### Hospital Bed Reductions in Swift Current

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House the Liberal opposition revealed that the number of beds at the Swift Current Regional Hospital may be slashed from 134 down to 80.

The CEO (chief executive officer) of the district confirmed that at least on preliminary planning briefs submitted to the NDP (New Democratic Party) government, suggests the number of acute care beds could be reduced to 80.

However, the reaction from the Minister of Health was almost as disturbing as that news itself. The minister told the media that it wasn't his concern. The possibility that 54 beds being slashed at a regional hospital is not his concern. The possibility of this facility losing its status as a regional hospital is not his concern.

If the Minister of Health is not concerned about a serious health care issue, who in government is? Obviously it's not the member from Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, this government's response to a serious health concern is typical. First it's deny, deny, deny that there's a problem. And then there is, they try to duck their responsibility. People are looking for leadership; it's time they saw it from the Premier and his government.

And, Mr. Speaker, in following up on the member's statement from Regina about what's showing in local town papers, here I have the *Indian Head Town Crier*: "Nurses speak out against health care." The *Wolseley Bulletin*: "Nurses concerned about health care."

You bet you better start looking in the paper.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### 1998 SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards of Excellence

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 13, 1998 the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs was proud to represent the province at the opening ceremonies of the 1998 Saskatchewan Indian Winter Games. These games brought together some 2,500 first nations youth from around the province.

On Tuesday evening the first ever 1998 SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards of Excellence was held in Regina. As part of the Saskatchewan Indian Winter Games, awards night celebrated the outstanding achievements and contributions made by Saskatchewan's aboriginal youth.

I was honoured to present one of the awards on behalf of the province. There were 42 nominees competing for six awards.

The awards presented and the winners in each of the categories were: education, Carmen Lewis, 17 years of age, from Island Lake First Nation; sports, Chico Peepeetch, 14 years of age, from Saskatoon; recreation, Standing Buffalo junior girls volleyball team; community, Rachel Jobb, 15 years of age, from Southend Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation; culture, Welland Ratt, 13 years of age, from Lac La Ronge Indian Band; innovation, Christopher Ross, 17 years of age, from Red Earth First Nation.

All nominees were exceptional, with a long list of accomplishments. Congratulations to all the nominees and the six winners of the awards. Indeed, with their outstanding backgrounds, they are all winners, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Balcarres Welding 50th Anniversary

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to allow me to congratulate a small business in my community. It's Balcarres Welding. It celebrated its 50th anniversary recently. Charlie Lucyk, who is the owner of Balcarres Welding, opened the doors after the war on August 16, 1947 under the name of Tymoschuk & Lucyk. Three years later they dissolved that partnership; however, during that time, established a welding and blacksmithing operation which has prevailed throughout the years, through thick and thin.

As times changed and new machinery was introduced, Mr.

Lucyk had to enlarge his shop three times to accommodate the overflow of business. He now has a building operating out of a 4,000 square foot shop with space, parts room and offices.

Balcarres Welding has built V-shaped snowploughs, self-emptying grain hoppers, bulldozer blades for farm tractors, truck hoists, cattle liners, and grain boxes, the demands of a very innovative gentleman. It was the first rural shop to own a plate metal shear in rural Saskatchewan. This shear will cut a 10-foot wide sheet of plate metal.

In '79 Balcarres Welding became a family business when Dennis joined his father. And today Balcarres Welding is thriving in that community, offers many services. And close to 300 people turned out for an event to congratulate and thank Charlie Lucyk and his family for contributing greatly to that small community of Balcarres in rural Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League Champions

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is getting to be almost automatic for me at this time of the year. I am happy to report to the Assembly that the Weyburn Red Wings, as of last Friday, are once again the winners of the Hanbidge Cup, the champions of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League.

This is the second year in a row the Red Wings have won the title and the fourth time in five seasons. That's a record any team can be proud of. And at the same time that I'm boasting, I must extend my sympathy to the members from Carrot River Valley, Indian Head-Milestone, and Estevan. It was their teams that the Red Wings skated through on their way to the cup. In particular, I congratulate the Nipawin Hawks, who won the northern division championship. But now once again, the Red Wings advance to the Anavet Cup beginning this Saturday night in Weyburn, against Winkler, Manitoba. And I've got my game tickets here and I'm going to be at the game.

After that series is over, we go to the Royal Bank Cup National Tier Two Championships in Nanaimo, B.C. beginning on May 5th. I understand that Nanaimo is lovely in May.

I congratulate the Red Wing organization, the coach, Dwight McMillan; general manager, Ron Rumball; and of course the players, who have made Weyburn synonymous with junior hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Displayco's 20th Anniversary

**Ms. Murray:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the pleasure of speaking at Displayco's 20th anniversary on behalf of the Premier and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Displayco, the trade show professionals, is a Regina-based company with offices in five major centres including

Edmonton, Calgary, and Kelowna. Displayco is involved in planning trade shows, display construction and fabrication, design and graphics, rentals, exhibitor training, and installation and dismantling services.

On April 1st, Douglas Critchley, president of Displayco Canada, sent a letter to the Premier informing him of Displayco's upcoming 20th anniversary. I would like to quote briefly from it. It says:

Twenty years have passed since Displayco first opened its doors. We are proud to have Saskatchewan as our home. Our success is a direct result of the business climate that has been created by you and your colleagues in the provincial government. All too often government is not given the credit it is due for helping businesses such as ours be successful.

The Government of Saskatchewan is delighted to see the success that Displayco has achieved and we congratulate them. The company's performance is proof that Saskatchewan-based companies can compete, grow, and succeed in markets across the country.

Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Rural Road Traffic Accidents

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Madam Minister, information from SGI's (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) traffic accident information system says fatalities from vehicle accidents on rural roads in Saskatchewan are up 37 per cent over the past three years. Even worse, the TAIS (traffic accident information system) information shows the number of people killed in accidents on rural roads increased by a whopping 76 per cent in '97 over 1996.

Madam Minister, that is some very tragic and bloody evidence of your government's failure to fund road maintenance in Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) has been telling you for months that rural municipalities need at least 56 million this year just to maintain rural roads. But the NDP came up with less than half of that amount. It's no wonder people are dying on our grid roads.

Madam Minister, your NDP government's policy of consistently underfunding rural road maintenance is killing people in Saskatchewan. Will you finally pull your head out of the pothole it seems . . . appears to be stuck in and take action on SARM's funding demands?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member opposite for my first opportunity this session to answer a question in the House, Mr. Speaker.

When fatalities happen on any of our roads, it's always a tragedy, for whatever reason. But traffic information safety reports, that those figures are drawn from, show that excessive speed and alcohol are still, and the not wearing seat-belts, are still the major causes.

And I'd like to quote from the *Norquay North Star*, April 9, 1998. Headline, "Road repair plea made."

"Alberta roads are in desperate need of repair," said the president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. "Right now our ratepayers are telling us that our road infrastructure is crumbling." Heinen said rural roads have been deteriorating since government cut provincial road grants by 20 per cent to reduce the deficit.

So it's the lack of federal contributions to our road system and the reckless abandonment of rail lines that's putting the pressure on all the roads in western Canada. So we think you should direct your questions to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess what the minister is saying, because the roads are crumbling in Alberta it's okay for our roads to crumble and they're not going to do anything about it.

Madam Minister, it's non-answers like that one that have the people across this province up in arms. Your NDP government has absolutely failed to respond to the rural road crisis.

SGI accident statistics make one thing perfectly clear. Your government is ignoring the critical need for more funding to maintain our rural roads and it's killing people.

The statistics also say that one of the leading causes for fatalities on rural roads is driving too fast for road conditions. Madam Minister, given the pathetic state of our rural roads, any time you take your truck out of park you're driving too fast for road conditions.

Madam Minister, your lack of funding for rural roads is killing people. Will you make a commitment today to increase funding for rural road maintenance so that people can be confident that these roads are safe to drive on?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, we are already ahead of the member opposite. Because if he was listening, in the budget on March 9 we already have a substantial increase in this year's budget for highways and a 14 per cent increase in the funding for rural roads.

Mr. Speaker, all the time that I haven't had any questions to answer this session, I've been sitting here and contemplating across the aisle. And I've seen the . . . It's like a fairy tale, Mr. Speaker. Across here I see the Conservative Party — the Rip Van Winkle party who put themselves to sleep. And then they woke up a little bit and turned themselves into the Hansel and Gretel party and dropped crumbs behind them, saying follow me to the Saskatchewan Party.

And then over there we have the seven dwarfs, the seven dwarfs, and I don't know all of their names. There's only six of them because the Doc is grumpy because he doesn't have a seat.

And then in the end we have the three bears, wondering, you know, who's been sitting in their chair. So nobody can say, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a fun place to be.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### SaskPower Proposed Investment in Guyana

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. All hon. members I'm sure will want . . . Order. I'm sure all hon. members will want to allow question period to consider in an . . . to continue in an orderly manner.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, on November 6, 1997 the SaskPower board directed SaskPower Commercial to conclude the capitalization transaction to the purchase of Guyana electrical corporation. That sounds like SaskPower Commercial was on the verge of completing the Guyana deal back as far as November 6.

Mr. Minister, what action did SaskPower Commercial take as a result of this direction from the board? Did SaskPower Commercial sign any documents that committed SaskPower or SaskPower Commercial to any type of financial obligation with respect to Guyanese electrical corporation?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it has been indicated on a number of occasions there was a letter of intent signed between SaskPower Commercial and the Guyanese electric company for the purchase of 50 per cent of the Guyanese electrical company.

And there was a long, arduous process of due diligence. People went to Guyana to do the inventory, to do the inventory of the company. Legal documents were explored. And at the end of the discussion and debate it was decided, after looking at the due diligence, that the deal would not be concluded.

And I say to the member opposite that he is probably well aware of all of the machinations, discussions that took place. We've reported to the House in great detail and also in Crown Corporations Committee. When the appropriate time comes you'll be able to ask any and all details, and the answers will certainly be given.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Minister, one thing we learned from Channel Lake is that Jack Messer can move pretty fast when he wants to do a deal. The SaskPower board gave approval in principle to the Channel Lake deal on March 13, '97 and by March 27 the deal was done. That's why this board minute is so frightening. On November 6, SaskPower Commercial was

directed to conclude the capitalization agreement. That sounds to me like they're on the verge of cutting a deal for \$31 million.

Mr. Minister, what action did SaskPower Commercial take as a result of this clear board decision? Did they sign any further agreements with respect to the GEC (Guyana Electricity Company) deal? Are Saskatchewan taxpayers on the hook for any money that you're not telling us about?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite if he would listen — and I guess this is one of the things he will learn if he becomes the leader of the Conservative Party this weekend, you're going to have to learn to listen. The . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, it's the Saskatchewan Party, they . . . the turncoat from the north-east part of the province hollers from his seat. He corrects me, it's not the Conservative . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order, order. Now the . . . Order, order. Order! Order. The hon. member, the minister, will recognize that the term he just used to describe the member is not parliamentary and I'll ask him to withdraw that remark.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I do withdraw the term "turncoat." I meant to say the members who left the Liberal Party . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order, order. Now the . . . Order. Order. The . . . Order! — I will ask all hon. members, including the minister, to come to order. And when I ask the minister to withdraw the remark, I ask the minister to do it in an unqualified manner, to withdraw the remark and then briefly conclude his response.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment that I used unequivocally. But I want to make clear that, that when it comes to Guyana and the member opposite asking the question, who is now running for the leadership of the Conservative Party, having sat as a Liberal, that he has to worry about listening to people. This is what I meant to say, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to make it very clear that there was a letter of intent signed between SaskPower Commercial and the Guyanese government. And then the process is: that recommendation has to go to the Power board, to the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) board, to cabinet.

And although there may have been a recommendation from the SaskPower Commercial, it had to go through a number of other steps before it was approved. And at the end of the day it was not approved.

So when you keep saying, Mr. Member from Melfort, next leader of the Conservative Party, that there was a deal made, there was never a deal made. We rejected the deal because it wasn't economic.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Yorkton Hospital Bed Closures

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my

question is for the Minister of Health or his designate.

Mr. Minister, even in your own constituency now there is a health crisis. The East Central Health District is three and a half million dollars in debt, and the only way to deal with the debt is more cuts to services in the Yorkton hospital.

On April 23 the board will be meeting to discuss the cuts it will be forced to make. Eunice Off, a registered nurse at the Yorkton hospital, has told us they are considering the closure of eight of sixteen pediatric beds in Yorkton hospital, as well as the closure of some intensive care beds.

Mr. Minister, what are you going to do to deal with the crisis in your own backyard. Will you give us the assurance today there will be no further bed closures in the Yorkton hospital?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Health, I will give these assurances. The Minister of Health and the Department of Health and this government will continue to work with that health district and every health district in the province to provide the best and most appropriate level of care to the people of our province.

I would remind that member this morning that in the most recent budget of this government, health care spending was increased by \$88 million — \$88 million. That represents an increase in funding to every health district in Saskatchewan. That brings the funding to health care in Saskatchewan to over \$1.7 billion, the largest expenditure of public funds on health care in this province's history, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your health system is breaking down at every level. First you close 52 rural hospitals, so more patients have to go to regional centres like Yorkton and Swift Current. Then you close beds at the regional centres so more patients have to go to Saskatoon and Regina. And then you close the Plains hospital so patients have to go to the Howard Johnson.

It doesn't make any sense, Mr. Minister, and you keep bragging about that you're spending more than ever on health care. Then why are we getting less and less services?

Mr. Minister, what are you going to do to address the crisis in regional centres like Yorkton? How can you allow bed closures in Yorkton when that hospital is now busier than it ever has been.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Minister, I don't think I need to remind anyone in this House, but I will. When members opposite look to this side of the House, this political party, this political movement, they know that this is the movement in Canada that pioneered medicare. We pioneered it right here in Saskatchewan. It's been our gift to Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what's happened with health care in Saskatchewan since 1991. Even in the most desperate circumstances which that party left this province in, in the most desperate circumstances which that party left us in, this government did not cut funding to health care, Mr. Speaker.

Each and every year we have provided new funding to health care. In the interim, Mr. Speaker, this government has designed with the communities of Saskatchewan a health care delivery model that fits us well for the 21st century.

He talks about loss of service. Just the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We have new services across this province. We have new services in emergency care; we have new technologies available — never before available in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this, we're completing more surgeries on a daily basis today in Saskatchewan than ever before. That's what's happening.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Regina Emergency Services

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I see when I look across to that House and to that member, I see Rip Van Winkle. That government has been asleep for the last seven years. Day after day, Mr. Speaker, in this House we raise issues that show us there is a bed crisis in the city of Regina. They don't seem to understand.

An audit of emergency rooms in Regina concludes that 43 per cent of emergency room patients at the Plains are seen during the evening and the night-time hours. However, for some reason that same audit recommends reducing the night-time operating hours of the Plains hospital emergency room.

Mr. Minister, surely you're not planning on following that recommendation?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, to borrow from the Minister of Municipal Government, I tell you, I've never seen a dwarf so large in all my life. And I've never known one to be called two-tier.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, day after day I listen to the Liberal caucus get up and question the Minister of Health. I wonder sometimes, Mr. Speaker, if that Liberal caucus has a mirror. I remind this Liberal caucus, today in British Columbia we have doctors withdrawing services. Today we're told in the province of Alberta we may have doctors withdrawing services. I see a picture yesterday from the hospital corridors and Alberta people laid out in the corridors. In Ontario, Mr. Speaker, a recent poll says that health care is the number one concern of Ontario people. In Liberal Maritimes, Mr. Speaker, health care — the number one concern of the Maritimes.

Now I ask myself and I ask the members, why would that be? I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the answer. It's because the federal Liberal government has given up their commitment to publicly funding medicare in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's interesting that they want to blame the federal Liberals. And I'd like to

quote from a newspaper article by Lewis Draper. Now Lewis Draper we all know is a former NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), a former NDP supporter. And he says, what I hate about the provincial budget is the hypocrisy of blaming the federal Liberal government for all the things that are unpalatable, and that's exactly what they're doing.

It goes on to say that:

This is a case of the provincial kettle calling the federal kettle black. It is reminiscent of the biblical parable of the man who was forgiven his debt of 10,000 talents to the king but who jailed the man who owed him 100 denarii until the debt was paid. (And this is taken from Matthew 18, verses 23 to 35).

So the provincial government should quit blaming everyone else. They should take on the responsibility of health care that they were elected to do. Mr. Minister, will you stop the cuts to health beds in Regina?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the member from Arm River says that we should ought to quit blaming. I'd say to the member from Arm River, if the shoe fits you wear it. Mr. Speaker, he wants to quote this morning, my good friend, Dr. Lewis Draper. He wants to quote. Well I want to quote one of his good friends. I'm just going to quote one of his good friends, who said, quote:

I will not stand here and tell you that the cuts in transfer payments we made were insignificant. They were not, for I will tell you they have . . . I will not tell you they would not have an impact. They have had an impact.

Do you know who said that, Mr. Speaker? The Hon. Allan Rock, the federal minister, the federal Liberal Minister of Health. Now the member there is quite anxious to quote people today. I'll quote another Liberal, quote:

If there are people who are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay.

Now that sounds to me very suspiciously, Mr. Speaker, as an Americanized model of health care, a two-tiered system of health care. Who said that? The current member from Arm River.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McLane:** — Because the member opposite, the former minister of Health who was part of the degrading health care reform system in this province has taken health care to where it's at, he is great at paraphrasing out of context. Those are the people of Saskatchewan saying in response to the closure of a hospital in Central Butte or a closure of a hospital in Canora, that's their response. They are so desperate they need help. They want to do anything, Mr. Speaker.

To continue to quote from Lewis Draper, he also says in response to the budget and the welfare reform:

After witnessing the disasters of health care reform in rural Saskatchewan, I shudder to think what they're going to do with the social services program.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP plans on closing the Plains hospital on October 31. That's not soon enough for most of these guys. They'd like to have it happen tomorrow.

Mr. Premier, can you tell this House that you will not allow emergency room service to be cut back at the Plains any further?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the front page of the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* last night, last night, in response to the kind of fear tactics that the Liberal caucus and others are spreading around the province. This is in regard to emergency services in Regina and the move of the medical family in the Plains hospital into the expanded facilities at the General and Pasqua.

The director of emergency services in Moose Jaw says, and I quote:

It won't really affect us one way or another. At the trauma centre's new home, patients will receive the same level of care they have come to expect at the Plains.

Mr. Speaker, now that's from someone who truly does know health care in southern Saskatchewan.

Now the member, when he first stood to his feet, he said that I was quoting him out of context. Well this is a surprising thing for him to say because the quote came straight off the 6 o'clock news, BBS (Baton Broadcasting System). There he was live in front of the cameras saying it. I'll read more of it — this is what was said live on television:

The Liberals agree, saying the government could cut waiting-lists for medical procedures by allowing private medical clinics for profit in Saskatchewan.

Harvey McLane. If the people are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay, Mr. Speaker. We're not interested, we're not interested in Liberal two-tier, Americanized medicine.

### Northern Power Rates

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last three years, I've stood up in this Assembly and spoke about the contributions that northern Saskatchewan have made to the province of Saskatchewan in general.

And once again we look at the three northern hydro generating stations — the one in Cumberland House, the one in Sandy Bay, and the one of course near Camsell Portage in the far North. These three dams bring government coffers a total of \$325 million annually and that accounts for almost 44 per cent of SaskPower's hydro generation capacity.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have obtained a list of the average monthly



power rates paid by the people who reside in Canoe Lake, and, Mr. Speaker, these people in Canoe Lake and in the entire northern part of Saskatchewan have to pay the highest power rates, in my opinion, in North America.

Mr. Speaker, some of these totals include \$459, \$718, and \$837. Does the minister in charge of SaskPower feel that these SaskPower bills are extremely excessive to say the least?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I will ask all hon. members to come to order. I know the minister has not begun his answer, but I also know that I could not hear him if he had. And I will ask all hon. members to allow the answer to be heard.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, in regards to the hydro — for example he mentioned the case in Cumberland House — actually there was a \$23 million settlement in regards to Cumberland and the agreement will be finished. The last statement was made of 3.8 million this year.

As well when you look at historical development, Mr. Speaker, and in regards to the jobs, over 50 per cent of the jobs in regards to the . . . one of the offshoots of that development was the building of the famous Cumberland bridge. And over 50 per cent of the people, you know, were employed in regards to the building of that bridge. And I must say that was a great success story.

And I might even add, Mr. Speaker, when we look at development in the North, the Sask enterprise fund, which is in regards . . . right in the middle of his own constituency — his own riding — has been providing approximately a million dollars a year in regards to economic development in northern Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the history of hydro and the recent development of hydro, we have indeed have been partnering with northern Saskatchewan and making it not only beneficial in regards to services, but also with jobs and economic development.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again Quiet Owl has not spoken. The key point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that the northern senior citizens, people on fixed income, families, and the business communities are extremely frustrated with the high power rates of northern Saskatchewan.

And I will share with the Minister of CIC and the Minister of Northern Affairs, a list of some of the bills from some of the residents of Canoe Lake that are paying such a tremendous high cost for power.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the minister, I will challenge the minister today, would you at the very least make an effort to travel to northern Saskatchewan to talk to people specifically — specifically the business community, the senior citizens, the people that pay high power rates — and sit down and work out a solution with them to bring these levels down?

They have ideas, they have concepts. They have things like co-generation power plants, homestead boilers, solar panels. They even have expanded natural gas to the North. Mr. Minister, will you make that commitment today, that you'll go there and you'll come up and work up with solutions alongside of northern people to bring these power rates down?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, again those Liberals are forgetting exactly what they are doing in regards to the, to the power rates. In many, in many cases, Mr. Speaker, we put in money for about 80 houses last year in regards to northern Saskatchewan. But how much are the Liberals putting in, in regards to houses? Zero.

**An Hon. Member:** — Nothing. Zero. Nothing.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Zero, Mr. Speaker. If that member was doing his job properly he'd be visiting Ralph Goodale and the federal Liberals to make sure that the money was there in regards to northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're trying to get money from the feds in regards to economic development. We now have over a thousand people working at the mines. We're trying to get . . . We have 5 million increased in our budget on economic development this year. We want to get some money from the feds, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the member sits with me and says yes, we need the 5 million from the federal level to be able to do economic development in the North.

And I think that will help out in regards to northern Saskatchewan. As far as the power rates, Mr. Speaker, they are the best in Canada. I think when you're looking at our rates, anywhere in the Crowns we have the best rates anywhere in Canada. Maybe he wants to look in privatized areas in where Liberals are, Mr. Speaker, but not here in this province.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce in the west gallery, Mr. Bob Ivanochko, who is a constituent, and his father, who greatly enjoys the activities in the legislature. And Bob is a very active community volunteer, working in all areas. And I just want you to help me welcome them here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — With leave, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce another guest who has joined us.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, we have literally thousands of people who serve the people of Saskatchewan through the Department of Social Services. One of them today has joined us in the gallery. I would like to introduce to all members, Ms. Lori Currie, who works within the Department of Social Services and is taking a particular interest in government these days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to present the answer to question no. 29, and in the interest of open, accessible, and responsible government, with the leave of the House, I would also like to provide answers to questions 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The answer to question 29 is provided, and with leave, simultaneously, the answer to questions 30 through 38. Is leave granted? Leave is granted and the answers for questions 30 to 38 are also tabled.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 20 — The Election Amendment Act, 1998

**Hon. Mr. Mitchell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Election Amendment Act, 1998.

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer has by long tradition in this province operated as an independent office performing the important functions of the Chief Electoral Officer under the election process. Certainly all members of this legislature would agree that it is imperative that this operational independence continue to ensure the ongoing integrity of the democratic process in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will formally institutionalize this traditional independence by making the Chief Electoral Officer an officer of this Assembly. As such, the Chief Electoral Officer will answer directly to you, and through you, to the members of this House. This government is taking this important procedural step to ensure that the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer remains separate from the political fray in conducting the functions of the office under The Election Act, 1996.

In addition to formally establishing the Chief Electoral Officer as an officer of the Assembly, the Bill also sets out a new process for the appointment, remuneration, and if necessary, the removal or suspension of the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer will be appointed by resolution of the Assembly itself. While this House is in session it also falls to the Assembly to consider the removal or suspension of a Chief Electoral Officer, where necessary, for misconduct and the appointment of an Acting Chief Electoral Officer if the Chief

Electoral Officer is unable to perform the duties of the office due to a suspension or illness or other inability to act.

While this Assembly is not sitting, the Board of Internal Economy, as a joint committee of this Assembly, will be responsible for considering suspension issues and for the appointment of an Acting Chief Electoral Officer if and when that proves necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Board of Internal Economy will also bear the responsibility of setting the remuneration and expenses of the Chief Electoral Officer in conducting the duties of this position.

Once appointed, it will then fall to the Chief Electoral Officer to in turn appoint an assistant chief electoral officer who will assist with day-to-day functions and serve in the place of the Chief Electoral Officer where necessary.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as an aspect of the statutory independence of the Chief Electoral Officer as an officer of the Assembly, the election report of the Chief Electoral Officer will now be provided directly to the Speaker of the Assembly for tabling purposes. Similarly, the Chief Electoral Officer will provide an annual report to the Assembly through the Speaker to report on the ongoing functions of the office.

Mr. Speaker, this government has long recognized the need for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to operate without influence from the executive branch of government. With this important procedural step we will be formalizing this long-established practice in a way which will demonstrate to Saskatchewan people that their electoral rights are in all ways properly protected.

Before taking my seat, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the consultations that have taken place with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party with respect to this legislation. And I want to thank them for their positive approach to those consultations and the various concepts that are contained in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Election Act, 1996.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(1100)

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that I think has some value in it. It's certainly important that the processes of this legislature and the electoral Act been done in a non-partisan manner. And the selection of a returning officer, Chief Electoral Officer for the province, to be a member of this legislature in the sense of an officer of the legislature, I think is a valuable addition to the services provided to the people of Saskatchewan.

However, we do have some questions related to this, Mr. Speaker, particularly on how the new process will work. Some form of selection or gathering of names for people to be a part of this process to be ultimately selected to be the Chief Electoral Officer has to be part of what is happening.

How that process will work is going to be very important. What names are put forward, who puts them forward, who narrows the list down to a selected group of candidates, and finally, who makes the recommendation to this Assembly as to who the potential Chief Electoral Officer is going to be is going to be extremely important. And we need to find out from the minister in charge just how that will be done. Those are some of the considerations that need to be discussed in this Assembly before the decision is finally made.

One of the areas though, Mr. Speaker, in the discussion of removing politics from the selection of the Chief Electoral Officer, if that's the goal, if that's the goal of this piece of legislation, to remove the politics from it, then we have to ask why does the selection of the returning officers at the constituency level, why does the selection of the deputy returning officers at the constituency level not also fall under this type of legislation; that those selections will be made in a non-partisan manner, Mr. Speaker, so that they're no longer the political rewards handed out to the workers at the constituency level by the governing party — because that's traditionally what those roles have been.

The returning officers and the deputy returning officers, the poll clerks, have been political rewards in the past for partisan politics at the constituency level. If it's the government's intention to remove politics from the selection of the Chief Electoral Officer, which we support, then it should go down the line also, Mr. Speaker, and take in those other positions that do affect, the same as the Chief Electoral Officer does . . . and those are the returning officers, the deputy returning officers and the poll clerks at election times, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting though to note, Mr. Speaker, that this particular Bill is coming forward dealing with The Elections Act when last year we had an Election Act amendment also, and that Act has not been entirely proclaimed at this time. I guess we have to ask the government why has the government not proclaimed last year's Bill before bringing forward another Bill?

Those are some of the areas, Mr. Speaker, that we wish to delve into further. We'll be discussing this more in this Assembly so at the present time I would like to move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 28 — The Meewasin Valley Authority  
Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Mitchell:** — Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends The Meewasin Valley Authority Act. It implements the budget decision to maintain the 1998-99 statutory funding for the Meewasin Valley Authority at the same level as last year. This is the fifth year that the province has maintained funding at this level, permitting the Authority to continue an excellent level of service in developing, conserving, and enhancing the river valley in the Saskatoon area.

This Bill establishes the statutory funding contributions from the city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan, and the province. For 1998-99, this funding will be \$1,870,869 in total. This amendment replaces the assessment-based funding formula with a fixed funding level and provides for a review of

this funding at least every five years. The shares of funding among the city, the university, and the province remain the same.

In addition to the funding provisions, the Bill contains a number of administrative amendments that have been requested by the Authority. It contains provisions to streamline the development of field process and to correct a number of land descriptions in the Authority's boundaries.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to commend the Authority on a worthwhile year, and look forward to its continued stewardship of the Saskatchewan River valley in the Saskatoon area.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act.

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

**Mr. Flavel:** — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

**Mr. Flavel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Speaker, we have in the west gallery some visitors here from Regina that have moved down from Saskatoon, and some visitors from Martensville that are in on Easter week to visit them. They're seated at the very top so you can barely see them up there.

We have Adele, Nolan, and Curtis, which are relatives or Flavels. And then their visitors from Martensville: Paulette, Darnel, Morgan, and Courtney, who are around today. They're doing some visiting around the city and toured the Legislative Building and are heading for the museum, watching some action in the chambers.

And I would ask the members to join with me in welcoming them to the Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**SECOND READINGS**

**Bill No. 28  
(continued)**

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments in regards to the minister's introduction of the second reading of the Bill 28, Meewasin Valley Authority Act.

While I understand this is a fairly simple piece of legislation that makes some minor changes, there is one interesting note to . . . or change to take note of. And the minister alluded to the fact that currently the Authority, funding formula of the Authority, is based on the city mill rate.

And the government minister had indicated that they will

continue a dollar value rather than a mill rate value. And they've continued this funding for, I believe the last five years, which I think in one case certainly gives an indication to Meewasin Valley Authority that they will have sufficient funds to continue to function, operate, and to have a steady source of funds so that they know what their funds are going to be.

However, when you look at the mill rate . . . removing that from the mill rate structure, I'm not exactly sure how this directly affects them, other than most businesses and most individuals in the province, when you look at mill rates and that where the new assessment that has just taken place, I think a lot of people would like to be put on a straight dollar value versus following the mill rate structure.

But it's . . . The piece of legislation in a lot of respects doesn't change a lot. It certainly maintains a flow and a guaranteed flow of funding and of contributions so that Meewasin Valley Authority can continue to function and provide a beautiful atmosphere and a park setting for the people of Saskatoon and surrounding area — or anyone who happens to be visiting the city — to go out and enjoy a lot of the natural settings of the Saskatchewan River going through the city. And I think that's certainly appropriate. We certainly want to preserve a lot of our natural heritage and natural value.

And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, in this case I don't know if there's much purpose in holding up any further review as far as second readings. I'm more than prepared to — I shouldn't say I — I think our caucus is more than prepared to allow this piece of legislation to move into committee where we can deal a little more specifically with areas of concern, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

#### **Bill No. 9 — The Parks Amendment Act, 1998**

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After my remarks, I will be moving second reading of The Parks Amendment Act, 1998.

The purpose of these amendments is to add lands to the provincial parks system to better protect and represent important ecosystems within the province. The amendments also make minor changes of a housekeeping nature to meet local needs and provide more effective and efficient administration.

The Macdowall bog located south-west of Prince Albert will be designated as a protected area. This area is approximately 57 hectares or 140 acres in size. It contains a number of rare plant species including several species of orchids.

Public consultation has shown that there is strong support for the designation of this unique area. The protected area designation will allow this area to be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Also an additional 1,300 hectares or 3,200 acres of Crown land will be added to Douglas Provincial Park. Public consultation has shown that there is support for this addition of land to the

park. This native grassland supports a variety of prairie nesting birds, including the endangered burrowing owl. As well the shoreline contains one of the largest nesting concentrations of the endangered piping plovers in Saskatchewan.

These lands will also provide a more effective and easily administered boundary because it will then follow the existing Grainland community pasture fence line.

Several housekeeping provisions are included in this Bill. Errors exist in the legal description for Candle Lake, Douglas, and Meadow Lake provincial parks. The legal description of Lac La Ronge Provincial Park requires amending to remove a small area of land to provide the northern hamlet of Missinipe with additional space for expansion. Correcting errors in legal descriptions and readjusting boundaries provides for more effective and efficient park management.

These amendments ensure that Saskatchewan's provincial parks provide a better representation of our natural ecosystems and they support this government's commitment to an enhanced park system.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to move second reading of The Parks Amendment Act, 1998.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in making a few comments to this piece of legislation, one would say with the number of pieces of legislation on the Table that we have in front of us to date that there really isn't a lot of substantive matter to a number of pieces of legislation. But this, Mr. Speaker, I think does hold some substantive matter in it, especially when you're talking about the thousands of acres that are going to be absorbed into more provincial . . . or into provincial parks like Douglas Provincial Park.

And, Mr. Speaker, while we're not opposed to areas . . . or preserving of wildlife or areas of preservation, land preservation, park preservation, for the sake of the people of this province, there are some concerns we may have, and I think we can deal with the number of the issues of concern.

In regards especially to the Douglas Provincial Park where we're talking of a large section, chunk of farm land in 10 sections, and we would like to know how many stakeholders were consulted, whether the land's being expropriated or how the government is going about that process, and how much is it costing. And some of those questions we can certainly get to and deal with more specifically in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, as I've listened to the minister as well, I note that the piece of legislation does deal with more accurately addressing land descriptions and how the land descriptions are laid out; so that there is, I would gather, a greater clarification of what the boundaries are so that the people and the parks' officials themselves have a better understanding of the park area that we're talking of.

I guess one would ask, will be able to ask and certainly research a little more in depth in committee, as to what the cost was of acquiring the bog that were being talked about for . . . or the

Maddowall bog that's being talked about in this protected area.

So, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the piece of legislation before us, while I've mentioned earlier there are substantive areas of, of being acquired in the fact that we're talking of land base, the realities are this piece of legislation in many ways just has some minor changes that bring a lot of better clarification in regards to the parks that are talked about in the piece of legislation. And the areas of concern we certainly feel we can address more appropriately in Committee of the Whole.

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

(1115)

### Bill No. 27 — The Public Service Act, 1998

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to move second reading of The Public Service Act, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, this Act will replace The Public Service Act, 1947 which has served government in Saskatchewan well for more than 50 years. During that time, Mr. Speaker, of course the workplace has changed dramatically. We must now modernize our processes, procedures, and systems for human resource management if we are to keep pace. While there've been some amendments to the Act over these years, few of those amendments were of significance.

I'm pleased to inform you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the House today, that the amended Act will preserve the independence of the Public Service Commission and clarifies the role of commissioners in representing the public's interest. It defines the purposes of The Public Service Act. It provides for the orderly delegation of responsibility to departments, and it significantly simplifies the provisions regarding recruitment, selection, and appointment.

Several sections have been added to the Act. The first of these sets out broad goals and objectives of the Act, reinforces the continuing independence of the public service, and ensures that appointments to the classified public service will continue to be made on the basis of merit.

Another section clarifies the responsibilities of the Public Service Commission and provides for an orderly process of delegation of responsibilities to departments. This will allow for far more effective and timely human resource services. At the same time, the amendments insure that delegated responsibilities will be carried out in accordance with policies and principles established and monitored by the Public Service Commission.

Finally the provisions governing recruitment, selection, and appointment outlined in the Act have been simplified by retaining the important statements of principles, but removing administrative process details that can be covered in regulation or policy.

Mr. Speaker, in developing The Public Service Act, 1998 we undertook significant consultation, including the current public

service commissioners representing the public interests, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 600, The Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, deputy ministers of all departments, and human resource directors and human resource branch staff from all departments. All of the individuals and organizations, Mr. Speaker, who were consulted, were supportive of the general thrust of the proposed changes.

The public service unions, in particular, were pleased with the clarification of section 4(3), that the Act only applies to their members to the extent that their collective agreements do not cover that particular matter.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of The Public Service Act, 1998 is to maintain an independent and professional public service, to facilitate providing quality service to the public in response to changing public requirements, and to recruit employees to the public service and to develop a qualified public service in a manner that fulfils the purposes of this Act; to develop a public service that represents the diversity of the people of Saskatchewan; and to promote harmonious relations between the government of Saskatchewan, its employees in the public service, and the trade unions that represent those employees.

Mr. Speaker, The Public Service Act, 1998 will also make other minor changes of a housekeeping nature. These changes will not constitute any change in policy.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that members of the opposition will want time to review the Act, likely consult in the community about the Act, but I am hopeful that after we have had a good debate and discussion that in fact this Act might receive the unanimous approval of all members as it seeks to build a Public Service Commission for the future.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I am very pleased to move second reading of The Public Service Act, 1998.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments, Mr. Speaker, with regards to The Public Service Act, 1998. The minister talks about the importance of the Act going back to 1947 and the fact that it really hasn't had a major update since that time other than some minor amendments through the years. And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, we certainly can understand the fact it was time for an overhaul of the Act.

The minister talks about the Act certainly recognizing the independence of the Public Service Commission. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at The Public Service Act and the Public Service Commission in this province, that it is far from an independent agency. And that's an area that we'll all have, may have, minor disagreements over time.

But it's an area that needs to be debated, and if the government's talking about turning this into a truly independent agency, that's an issue I think we'd want to look at a little more carefully and certainly discuss a little more fully and see if there is a way of really changing the Public Service Commission and making, making it really an independent body or an

independent agency.

I think, Mr. Speaker, from what we have seen through the years, this has been an agency that has been used by all political parties, and certainly the current government is not immune from the fact that we look at people appointed to different positions. And this is an area where appointments certainly can take place in large numbers and people can be moved and more on the basis of politics versus the abilities to do the job — not taking away from people who are currently involved or people who have had long-time standing in the Public Service Commission.

But as the minister indicated, this is certainly a substantive Bill. There's a number of issues to be raised and to be looked at, and we don't feel at this time that it would be appropriate to move quickly through the Bill. But it would be rather important for us to look at it very carefully, to decipher it a little more closely, and to take the time to review it in depth to make sure that we are indeed doing due diligence as we review this piece of legislation and the changes that are being brought forward. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Bill No. 4, The Saskatchewan Evidence Act, has to do with our justice system and I think anything that involves our justice system at this time in history in Saskatchewan is considered important and worth noting.

The ability to accurately record the testimony of all pertinent witnesses in a legal proceeding is vital if our system is to work and if it is to work well. And I think people are always concerned about that, to make sure the testimony that is there and is on record is accurate.

For many in our province, Mr. Speaker, the thought of giving testimony oral in a court room is an unnerving experience. Unnerving because the court room situation is unique and strange to many people because they haven't been in there very often, and then to give that particular testimony under the structure that's there is, as I said, a somewhat unnerving experience. For others, Mr. Speaker, it's simply impossible. It is even worse for those who suffer from a form of physical or mental disability.

To simply exclude these people from our legal process or to make them take part under circumstances that cause them extreme duress and discomfort is wrong. It is wrong because of the discomfort it causes them. It is also wrong because it may well affect the accuracy of testimony that is given.

It appears to me, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill goes some way in addressing many of the needs of those individuals. I think as a society we must be ever cognizant of the different needs of all the people in our province. In the last couple of decades we've come a long way in becoming a society that goes out of its way to recognize the challenges that are facing the disabled. And this is a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, I understand these amendments are formulated by a steering committee made up of representatives of community agencies as well as of department officials. This committee, according to the minister, consulted extensively with people throughout Saskatchewan before bringing their recommendations forward to the provincial government.

I'll have some questions about this committee and its work in committee. However, a preliminary study of this legislation that we now have before us, it appears the committee did some very good work in coming up with proposals that not only deal with the special needs of the physically or mentally disabled, but all other adults who may be considered vulnerable in giving testimony in the usual open courtroom situation.

Special consideration has been given to those under the age of 14 years for quite some time in our province. And it appears this Bill simply extends the same rights and privileges to adults who for whatever reason are unable to give their testimony in the courtroom. In effect many of the changes proposed by Bill 4 simply give to adults some of the same considerations that have been given to many children under the age of 14.

With the changes proposed in this legislation, vulnerable adults, as the minister refers to them, will not be forced to appear in the courtroom in certain circumstances. Where it's necessary, they will be allowed to testify outside the courtroom or take a place behind a screen or barrier of some sort. The thinking behind this move appears to be that if the witnesses have increased comfort level they will be able to give a stronger testimony, making them better witnesses in general.

Mr. Speaker, if this allows these people to give more reliable testimony, then I think everyone is in favour of it. We are for anything that appears to make our justice system move more effectively.

For many, appearing directly in the courtroom may be so difficult that the testimony they give may not be as understandable or succinct as it could be or as it should be. As a result, otherwise pertinent testimony may not be given the weight by the judge or the jury that it perhaps should be given. Of course this would be wrong and in fact a miscarriage of justice. All people, Mr. Speaker, must be allowed to be part of the system if the justice system is to be fair for all.

These changes of course do not just go for those with a physical and mental handicap, but also those adults who feel vulnerable for other reasons. They may fear the fear of reprisal because of their testimony or they may be victims of certain types of abuse. All of these, Mr. Speaker, create hesitancy for them to testify and to testify as accurately and correctly and completely as they could and probably would want to.

I think we can all imagine, Mr. Speaker, how well we'd do on

the witness stand if we feared for our safety because of the testimony we were asked to give. How willing would any of us be to testify in those particular circumstances? Of course, allowing them to testify behind a screen or outside the courtroom via closed-circuit television won't remove all of these concerns but it does take the pressure off the immediate situation. It is true only a part . . . it is truly only a part of the solution, but I think it's an important part and I believe we're willing to go along with it.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in certain circumstances some adults in some cases may be allowed to give testimony via videotape. Once again, I believe it's already done in certain cases with reference to children.

Of course, when one speaks about videotaped testimony, the first concern that comes to mind is tampering with the tape or the witness in what is not a live proceeding. However, I'm fairly confident that enough safeguards will be built into the system that this will not, or should not, occur. We'll question the Minister of Justice about that when we get to the committee stage later in this session.

The use of videotape, as I understand it, will extend to those adults who for whatever reason have faulty memories. Again, we'll want to question the minister about that particular provision. I would have to think a faulty memory is a major drawback for a witness in a trial or a legal proceeding when accuracy is essential. And so that needs to be looked at very carefully to make sure that things are done decently and in order.

I will be asking the minister to clarify the exact procedure that is used with these witnesses whose memories may be affected by a mental disability or an illness. How do we know when the testimony from these particular people is accurate and when it isn't accurate? Obviously, if these individuals are pertinent witnesses, we have to do everything we can, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they can testify under the best possible circumstances.

So we are supportive of the changes put forward. However, I'm assuming that a system has worked through these issues. Once again, the minister can clarify that for us in the Committee of the Whole.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, amendments I've spoken about here are pretty much an extension to adults for provisions that have been in place for children for some time.

However, there are also some changes here for youth that on the surface appear fairly reasonable. For kids who, under 14, may unfortunately have some difficulty communicating because of a disability, in certain circumstances a family member or a friend will be allowed to sit near them when they are testifying. This will be allowed when the court deems it necessary to get the best possible testimony from that child.

I think this is important not only because we're doing something to give these children a measure of comfort, because also it is up to the court's discretion when that situation is there.

I think in all these matters it's important that they be decided on a case-by-case basis by the judge, and I believe this amendment is acceptable as long as it doesn't hinder or influence the legal process. I suspect that the rules governing this support person's presence would dictate that there is little or no verbal communication at all between the child and the support person, and that there's absolutely no coaching.

Mr. Speaker, on the whole, I support in principle the changes that are proposed in the Bill.

As Justice critic for the official opposition, I'm often critical of our justice system and the legal processes that are entailed in it. I'm not alone, Mr. Speaker, in criticizing the system. Over the course of the last number of years, we've seen many flaws in the system that have come to light. At the same time, we've seen very little done to fix these flaws. And while the changes we see in this Bill do nothing to address the major concerns in our justice system and our judicial process, that doesn't mean they are not positive amendments.

(1130)

As the official opposition and soon the Government of Saskatchewan, our party will continue to bring forth all the problems that exist in our justice system. However, when some positive changes are made, changes that appear to make sense, we will not only support those changes, we will also applaud them.

Once again, I am going to need some clarification from the minister regarding certain aspects of these changes now before us, but for the most part they do appear to be positive. In a day when many in our province and throughout our country have lost faith in our justice system and our judicial process, these changes I think do make sense. And that's all the people of Saskatchewan are asking from their system — that it make sense, a system like that.

I'm hopeful that soon the government will begin moving on many other problems we currently have in the justice system in this province. This Bill we have before us is an attempt to make the system work better for some, and I hope that our system will soon work better for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Bill No. 11**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 11 — The Trustee Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this particular Bill our caucus is opposed to this legislation. In our view this Bill misses the point of trust and puts into jeopardy a substantial segment of our economy and our society.

As the minister reviewed in his speech, this Bill will two main things. First, it allows trustees to invest trust property in any

form of security in which a reasonable, prudent investor would invest. The minister himself gave the obvious example of mutual funds.

Second, this Bill allows trustees to delegate investment decisions to outside sources such as a broker or financial planner.

As it stands now, trustees are restricted to a list of investments which yield lower returns but which are also low risk.

Further, as the minister reviewed, trust law places in doubt . . . some doubt on whether a trustee can delegate decisions unless the trust instrument specifically allows it.

What I would contend, Mr. Speaker, is that both of these features are included in current trust law for very good reason. We would be seriously damaging a solid tradition of trust law built by past legislatures if we allowed this Bill to pass.

First, on the matter of restricting the list of investments. I would observe that trusts are intended to be long-term institutions that have been able to float above the changes that happen from time to time in the market-place.

It is for this reason that trusts were originally designed to be the most conservative of financial entities. And it is good that they are. If you want an entity to be around for 30, 50, or 100 years then you need to avoid risk as much as possible. As the member from Cannington pointed out, Bre-X might have looked a good investment at one time. There are any number of mutual funds and even pension funds that were burned in that deal.

Over the course of the decades that a trust will exist these sorts of temptations will crop up in the market from time to time. I don't think that we are doing anyone any favours by giving trusts this kind of freedom.

I realize that there are probably trustees out there who are frustrated by the fact that they are sitting on a big pile of cash that is only making 3 or 4 per cent while everyone else seems to be pulling in single-digit returns. But I don't think we should be basing our decisions on long-term entities such as trusts on the passing whims or frustrations of this generation of trustees.

In particular, I recall the minister noted that the restrictive list prevents trustees from investing in mutual funds. In today's economy they're among the most popular investment vehicles for the non-expert investor.

Again, I want to repeat and re-emphasize that the popularity of investments is not and never has been and should not be the standard by which trust investments should be gauged. Likewise the restriction on this Bill of prudent and reasonable investor standard is really just a paper tiger.

The list of qualities given in the Bill for reasonable investor includes everything from considering the rate of return to general estimation of risk to inflation to the general state of the economy. Far from requiring the trustee to balance all of these factors, it just gives him a longer list of excuses.

If a trust goes belly-up, he can say just say he was trying to get

a better return and that he judged the risk to be reasonable. So suddenly the profound responsibility involved in being a trustee becomes a game of juggling other people's money. At the end of the day, no one may be held responsible if mistakes are made.

It reminds me a little bit of SaskPower's attitude toward the Channel Lake sale. Society has only allowed changes to trust legislation slowly and carefully so as not to endanger the funds that are supposed to last for generations. Allowing the funds to sway on the winds of the market fads and popular trends do not uphold that duty of protecting those trusts.

The second aspect of the Bill is likewise offensive although for different reasons. Allowing trustees to delegate their financial duties to others sounds like a good idea on the surface. After all, who couldn't use a little expert advice.

Well first, this part of the Bill is necessary only if you allow the first. Obviously if trustees can only put their money into a list of very conservative, few investments, there is no need for them to consult a broker. So you see how making one change to the basic concept of trust law brings a number of complications that you have to deal with.

Second, with all respect to the financial planning industry, just how expert are many of these planners and who decides who the expert is? It seems to me that right now the market is flooded with planners. Financial planning has become a little real estate in the sense that it is the profession of last resort for many people. In any case, it is a line of work that has a very high turnover rate, and for that particular reason, the qualification nets made there as experts is a very shaky kind of a qualification.

Again the industry is full of numerous financial planners who are very smart people and who do very well for their clients. Still, we have no guarantee that the trustees will pick good advisers. So there is a concern about who will be responsible if a trust was mismanaged. Would the trustee be able to throw his hands in the air and say, well that's what my broker told me to do; don't blame me. The possibility of this kind of thing happening, I think cheapens and demeans the role of trust in society and we should avoid it.

Finally I think that this part of the Bill begs a very important question. If the trustees are making the financial decisions on the trust, just exactly what are they doing? What is their role if not to make investment decisions on behalf of the trust. You might just as well make the broker or financial planner the trustee.

The parts of the current trust law that make the trustee solely responsible were put in there for very good reasons. Someone must ultimately be responsible for how trusts are managed. That's why they are called trusts. You trust someone to make the decision about these funds. That trust does not extend to third parties who may not be familiar with the intent or the history of the trust.

Before I conclude my remarks on this Bill, I want to point out a few things. I want to point out that we are not just talking about fancy, private trust funds or even just charitable bequests.



Under the definitions of this Bill, it extends to cooperatives, municipal boards, medical and hospital benefit associations, and park agencies. That represents a significant part of Saskatchewan society, Mr. Speaker. Those are all agencies that are involved in the public life of our province. We must consider very carefully if what we are considering today is putting those agencies at risk.

The next time there's a stock market crash or a Bre-X scandal or a downturn in the mutual fund industry, what will it mean? Will the local co-op have to close? Will small-town hospitals see their funds from bequests disappear? Will even municipal governments who have already been hard hit from NDP cuts see their funding further evaporate as international markets go through a correction?

No, Mr. Speaker, I think we are introducing an unacceptable level of risk to a segment of society that is supposed to put itself beyond risk. This is a bad and ill-considered piece of legislation. If it happens to make the committee stage, our caucus promises to give it a rough ride at that time. However, I think it would be far better that we just avoided that by defeating this Bill on second reading, and I urge all members to vote against this Bill.

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

#### Bill No. 14

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Calvert that **Bill No. 14 — The Adoption Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few more comments in regards to some of the comments I made the other day in relation to The Adoption Amendment Act. I think, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it's important to recognize the family whether it's a natural or an adoptive family. It's paramount that we all recognize a family as a family unit. And the piece of legislation we have before us today certainly does recognize a number of those components.

While adoptions have changed much over the last few years, not so long ago we saw, as I indicated the other day, that adoptions were something that you kept secret, where a child as they were growing up and into adulthood will often on many occasions would think back, well I wonder how my natural parents are doing — whether it's the mother or the father.

And we've seen in the past where young people, or even individuals of adult age who are adopted as children, have looked back and they've had to go through a long, tedious process of locating their birth parents. And in many cases when they finally had arrived and gone through that process and had the privilege of meeting the birth parents, we've found that there have been some warm relationships that have been renewed.

And I think most people nowadays certainly want to have a lot of knowledge about their birth parents and the situations that were faced. And recognizing the fact that while a birth parent may give up a child for adoption, they're not necessarily giving

up that child for adoption because they didn't really want the child or that they really didn't feel an obligation to the child, but the fact that there were other circumstances that may dictate the reasons for that adoption. And the legislation before us certainly simplifies a lot of that process.

And we've seen a number of changes. The fact that this piece of legislation recognizes the birth father as well as the birth mother. And I think in the past we've certainly given more recognition to the birth mother and have failed to recognize that the birth father has some rights as well. And this piece of legislation acknowledges that and brings that to the forefront and recognizes the fact that both birth parents have . . . do have a responsibility, and also in many cases have had a relationship, loving relationship that they want to extend and will want to keep some contact with an adopted child.

The other fact, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this piece of legislation certainly sets out in . . . uses the language set out in The Hague Convention On International Adoption. And we've seen more and more over the past number of years of international adoptions.

And while on one hand international adoptions have not taken place . . . or have been utilized in a manner that we would see acceptable, the fact that some abuses of international adoptions have taken place where people have gone to other countries and almost, basically, you could almost use the term entered into basically a slave market by buying and monetarily have taken advantage of adoptions.

And I think it's important that in this province as well, we recognize the fact we want adoptions to take place on the basis of children having the privilege of knowing that they're being adopted by parents who want to extend hands of love and care and bringing that child up in a loving and caring home.

And recognizing the language of The Hague Convention I think is certainly important as we look beyond the borders of our province and our country in regards to extending a hand to individuals who do not have the privilege or may not have the opportunity of being raised in a loving and caring home.

So that, Mr. Speaker, I think is certainly, certainly appropriate and I'm pleased to see that this piece of legislation adopts that as well.

(1145)

And the other concern we did have, and I believe the minister alluded to, is the fact that the changes to the legislation do not go beyond allowing biological access or even communication in a situation when a child has been adopted by another family. And what I mean by that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we don't have . . . or the piece of legislation before us does not extend privileges beyond the fact of having an opportunity down the road to communicate with an adoptive child to find out how they're doing.

And what we have seen in the past, and I know I think what we are seeing as a result of more openness in adoptions is where birth parents may want to have more of an ongoing communication and access with the adopted child. And I think

that, Mr. Speaker, could certainly become disruptive, and adoptive parents may find it more difficult to raise the child as a responsible young person if the birth parents were totally involved from the time the adoption took place till later on in life.

So I think that's important that this piece of legislation recognizes that, recognizes the importance of the adoptive parents to be able to raise that child as if that child was their own. Because, Mr. Speaker, we find many people who are adopting are adopting on the basis of the fact that either for some reason or other they were unable to have children and yet they had a loving relationship, a warm home environment, and wanted to pass that on to a child.

And in passing that on to a child, it is the responsibility of the parents is to train up children and to raise children so that they will become young and responsible adults. And if they . . . if there was, if you will, ongoing interference by birth parents, that may make that very difficult to do.

And so I think that's a piece of this legislation that's important to recognize the fact that adoptive parents have a responsibility and have a right as well to raise that child based on how they would like to give that child the opportunity to become that responsible adult through the training process, and they don't need interferences from outside. It's just like natural parents don't need interferences from outside.

I think we all may go through that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, while I can certainly see in my situation and the situation that our family has faced, I think many times I've run into parents where they feel that maybe the grandparents interfere a little too much and makes it a little more difficult. I think as well this could certainly be a situation here.

But in general I believe most people feel that they seek, would seek advice from elderly parents as to how to train and raise a child. But they also want to feel that they have that real opportunity and real privilege, and I think adoptive parents certainly want to feel that as well.

So in general, as I look to the piece of legislation we have before us, while we may have some more questions and a few questions just for clarification in Committee of the Whole, I don't feel as Social Services critic for the official opposition nor do my colleagues feel that this is a piece of legislation that needs to be held up or should be held up, but that we can certainly deal with a number of any concerns we may have although I see it as a very positive piece of legislation in Committee of the Whole.

With that, I want to thank the minister for his opening comments and for the suggestions and the reasons behind the piece of legislation we have before us.

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

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs

#### Vote 30

**The Chair:** — I'd ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I should explain that I'm the Provincial Secretary. My estimates are kind of a subset of Intergovernmental Affairs and I think we are dealing with four, five, somewhere around there, subvotes of this department.

That having been said, I am honoured today to be joined by the assistant deputy minister, Paul Osborne, who sits to my right. To his right is Melinda Gorrill, who is the director of administration. Behind me is Michael Jackson, the chief of protocol. And to his right is Terina Abrahamson, the last name notwithstanding, she's the director of the office of French language coordination.

**The Chair:** — The Chair of Committee needs leave to move over administration, accommodation, and go to Provincial Secretary subvote (IA14). Will the committee give leave?

Leave granted.

#### Subvote (IA14)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Good morning, and good morning to your entourage. It's rather interesting that you have one person for every line that we're dealing with. And I guess that gets us into the first question, because this is on the verge of almost being embarrassing that we're spending time to go through this. And we've pulled out, I believe you were correct when you said five lines.

And I believe one of the lines would be Government House, so we have one house that we're taking care of. We have a government web site, so we have one computer web site we're taking care of. Protocol and special events, so we have one dinner planner. Office of French language coordination, so we're translating some documents. And Lieutenant Governor's office, who's an office we're taking care of. And we've sort of created an entity to deal with this, and I'm not sure that that is really the way to go around it. Maybe we should have left it all were it was originally.

We don't have a whole lot of questions for you because obviously on five lines how many questions can we have. My first question though is on the procedure that brought us here this morning. It appears to me that the department that we're looking at today really isn't even a department at all because as we just went through jumping over a number of issues to get here. This is actually a subvote that we're going to study in great detail — maybe an exaggeration — but a subvote that will deal with in some detail.

It's a subvote of the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. And I guess I'm wondering if you could tell us briefly what the thinking was to bring this forward in estimates separately from the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Yes perhaps an explanation is in

order to the members and to the public who are listening. About a year ago I had an operation on my spinal cord. I go for rehabilitation every day. This is a light portfolio which was designed to accommodate my medical needs.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you for giving the government's reasoning behind this. In fact, I believe it's only a couple of years ago when the department known as the Provincial Secretary was renamed as Intergovernmental Affairs. Is that correct?

(1200)

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — There has been department of Provincial Secretary for a very long period of time. If you go back to the earliest cabinet, there were four ministers in the cabinet besides the premier, one of which was the Provincial Secretary. This is a very old portfolio.

Over the years it has varied in its importance. During the Blakeney years it was a separate portfolio. During, I think, the Devine years it was combined with others. For a period of time this was a separate department. Actually when another one of my colleagues was ill and needed a lighter portfolio, it was a separate portfolio at that time.

So it's varied between being a separate, stand-alone department and combined with others.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. It's a little difficult to sort of attack that situation when you're sort of saying these are situations that are created when someone for medical reasons can't quite handle the job and so you create a job so that there still is a job there. And maybe if at some time in . . . or times past in Saskatchewan history that hasn't been a position, maybe that should have been reconsidered.

I believe, in fact, several of the subvotes that were once listed separately under the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs have simply been rolled up into a single subvote. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — I'm sorry, I did not follow the member's question. Can you restate it.

**Mr. Heppner:** — I believe that several of the subvotes that were once listed under . . . were once listed separately under the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs have simply been rolled up into a single subvote for this situation?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — The member is partially correct and partially not correct. Some of these have been . . . some of them are new. The government web site, for instance, is a new subvote recognizing the growing importance of this as a communication tool.

Some of them have been separate. When the Intergovernmental Affairs and Aboriginal Affairs Department was put together, these were items which were felt to be somewhat separate and apart from the Intergovernmental Affairs. And in some cases they were separated, they were given to me for personal reasons. Office of French language affairs, I am, after a fashion, bilingual and so it was given to me. So it's a mixture.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. You just mentioned the new item that was in there and that's a computer web site. And I do have a specific question dealing with the finances on that one. I believe the information given says that \$150,000 was the amount allotted to that. Is most of that start-up costs or is this considered to be what will probably be an ongoing amount through the years?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — No, there's very little start-up costs. I think the member can look forward to sums of this sort in the ongoing, in the ongoing years. I'd also say I think that our expenditures are among the most modest of any of the governments in Canada. And so I think these are . . . we consider these to be minimal expenditures for this particular responsibility.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, I guess the key part of that question you did answer is whether this was in large part start-up costs or ongoing costs — so they're ongoing costs. I think when you say that what we have on the web site is not very grandiose, you're correct; it's a fairly basic web site for those people that have checked it out.

Back to a topic we were on just a little earlier. You gave the reason that yourself and one other individual have been given this particular position — sort of a fill-in position for medical reasons. Is this position going to be gone once those kinds of occurrences and situations don't exist and put back in where it used to be?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — I think that's probably a reasonable assumption. That question would be more correctly, I think, addressed to the Premier in his estimates in Executive Council.

**Mr. Heppner:** — We listed at the start, the five items that you're in charge of, which is the Lieutenant Governor's office, French language coordination, protocol and special events, government web site, and Government House. Which one of those takes the most of your time? I mean, I'm looking at those and saying, what do you do in all those areas.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — The two on which I've spent a good deal of time are, the office of French language coordination — this has responsibility for the francophone community in the province — the other one of which we've spent a fair amount of time are protocol and special events. But all of them, with the exception of the Lieutenant Governor's office — that doesn't consume a lot of my time — but apart from that one, I spend time on them all, but if you wanted the two I spent the most time on, I think it would be office of French language coordination, and protocol and special events.

**Mr. Heppner:** — The one new line that we talked about is the government web site which accounts for \$150,000 dollars. But even if we take that one off of the estimate, there's still a major increase from last year and I wonder if you could sort of give some justification why the increases are there and why they're as large as they are?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Let me go through this item by item then for the benefit of the member. There is an increase in funding, in \$50,000, from \$167,000 to \$217,000, in the office of French language coordination. This represents a recognition

that the francophone community in this province is struggling with a very high rate of assimilation. We have a very small francophone population in the province of around 25,000 people; only a third still use the language.

I think the membership in this House reflects that. I think we have five francophones, none of whom are able to use the French language, unless you have someone by the name of Shillington who's the minister of this portfolio. In addition I think it's fair to say that in the wake of the Calgary Declaration, all of the provinces have re-examined their relationship with their own francophone communities.

If the English provinces, if I may so refer to them, are to be credible when they assure Québécois that their language and their culture is safe within Confederation, if we're going to be credible in that subject, it is important that we perhaps err on the side of generosity when dealing with our own francophone communities in our province. Charity begins at home, I guess, is one way of phrasing this.

In addition, in the wake of the Calgary Declaration, I think all provinces, as I said, all provinces have re-examined this and determined to ensure that this is not a weakness in our approach to this all-important issue.

I think a generic question about them all — that which I just dealt with is one increase — is going to increase funding of 335,000 in protocol and special events. This is by far the largest, as you will appreciate.

We're beginning to gear up for two celebrations: the millennium celebration in the year 2000, although the primary responsibility for that is the federal government — the federal government is taking leadership on that and we will really support their efforts in many ways — the province's centennial is in 2005. We're beginning to gear up for that as well, and that will obviously be a major celebration in this province.

There is increased funding of \$38,000 to address operating pressures relating to Government House. This is part of a much larger budget and I think a broader use of this important facility in Regina.

Finally, round this section out with: there's increased funding of \$9,000. This funds miscellaneous operating pressures within the Provincial Secretary's subvote. They're really quite diverse, and if the member wants details, I think I'd send them over in writing actually.

**The Chair:** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And with the indulgence of the member from Rosthern, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce guests I have visiting this afternoon. They're seated in

the Speaker's gallery. It's a very new group of friends but very cherished friends. We have Susan, her daughter Shelby and daughter Jillian. I'm going to meet with them and enjoy a bit of lunch and a tour.

And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to give them a warm welcome today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Vote 30

#### Subvote (IA14)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. Back to the line that you discussed in some length, the French language coordination. I think it's obviously something that most people in Saskatchewan would support when you say that we're trying to make sure that when we came in strongly in favour of the Calgary Declaration, that we're putting something there that's tangible and saying, yes we support it and here's some of the evidence of it.

You also raised another interesting thing that goes side by side with that, and that was the fact that assimilation is definitely a problem and you relate it to this particular House where you have someone called Shillington as the person in charge of the French language.

And so I guess the question that I have following through with that, what kind of directions or time lines do you have in looking at this assimilation? Like at some point, if that problem continues, you will have a department with no one there that they're really working for. Do you have any consideration of that?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — We are concerned about the rate of assimilation and we've had long discussions with the Francophone community and their new president, Lorraine Archambault. We are at pains to emphasize the responsibility for stemming the rate of assimilation. The responsibility is that of the community.

We'll work with the community, we'll support them, but it is the responsibility of the Francophone community to deal with that rate of assimilation and they have got to encourage the young people in their community to use and preserve their maternal language, which is French.

It is their responsibility. We will support them, but it's the responsibility of the Francophone community to deal with it. That is very much I think, the approach of the president. And we're in fact meeting with her next week . . . in a couple of weeks to pursue that.

In addition, our agreement with the federal government, about three-quarters of our expenditures in this whole area are reimbursed by the federal government. We're meeting, we're now beginning the process of negotiating that with the federal

government. And the basis of our negotiations with the federal government will be the views of the Francophone community as to what they need.

The Francophone community has done a lengthy analysis of their needs, their challenges. We are now in the process of meeting with them, absorbing that analysis, and their view as to what their community needs, will I think form the foundation of our negotiations with the federal government which are just now commencing for a new agreement for reimbursement.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And I think you'd find a lot of support for one of the statements that you made, and that is that it's basically the responsibility of whatever group you're talking about to maintain their own language and their own culture. And I think people across Saskatchewan would underline that one with a lot of support. And I think as long as we keep in mind that we don't at some point find ourselves putting money where there is no one really using it, I think that's important as well.

Back to the web site that we discussed to some extent a little earlier on. What is the public's reaction to that web site and how do you gauge how effective it is?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — I think to be perfectly candid with the member, many of the public have suggested that our web site needs to be improved and perhaps modernized. The web site was, for a lengthy period of time, maintained by the — I was going to say the Provincial Library. I think it was actually the Legislative Library. It gradually . . . I think that they did an excellent job for which I think we owe them a vote of thanks, but it was sort of done in spare time by them. They didn't have the resources to do it and eventually it was thought wise to set it up as a separate, standalone responsibility. We're now just in the process of doing that.

But I think the reaction of many members of the public, from whom I hear, is that this web site needs to be improved and modernized. It is not all that it could be and I'm not sure that it compares favourably to web sites used by some other provinces.

**Mr. Heppner:** — I will have to admit at this point that I haven't checked our provincial web site so this next question comes out of a need for information and probably for also a lot of people that are watching. What government departments are basically included in that web site and are Crown corporations part of that particular web site?

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — All of the departments have something on; some are much more effective than others. But the Crown corporations are not part of the government web site. I think most of them, at least some of them, have web sites. Some of them are quite good; but they're done separately by the Crown corporations, really quite independently of our efforts.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. Question on Government House. There's a statement given here that there's some minor renovations, this sort of thing, going on. I'm wondering if you could comment on that particular line itself and what our status is on that one — Government House.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Okay, thank you. There are no renovations of any substance being done.

The additional funding is for the creation of an assistant manager position. We want to develop and expand the mandate and activities of Government House and make much more use of it. It is a very fine building which . . . and particularly on the exterior really a very beautiful building.

And we are of the view that we should be making much more use of this. Having put as much money into it as we have, we should be making much better use of it than we are. And so the funding in part creates the position of an assistant manager position to develop and expand the mandate.

Secondly, we're providing a grant of \$10,000 to the Government House Historical Society. And we are partnering with them and hoping that they can assist us in expanding the use of it and getting more people to use it.

Finally, we have 3,000 for communications. We don't have a pamphlet that we can hand out to explain to people what Government House is, what its history is, what its use is, and what they are seeing. So we want to develop a pamphlet. That will absorb a part of the \$3,000 in communications. It's a pretty modest sum.

**Mr. Heppner:** — The Government House, I guess all of us that have visited it and have taken friends of ours from out of province there. I think we're all very proud of it because it's a unique building in history. And its age and the information and the events that it carries with it are exciting.

And I'm just wondering, are we at least keeping up with the deterioration or are we falling behind? Because it is a beautiful structure and we'd hate to see the thing start to crumble.

(1215)

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — No, I think we believe that we are maintaining the building, where it's not deteriorating. Extensive renovations were done. This building came close to completely disappearing in the '70s. And I was the minister at the time; I think it was about 1980 or so. I was the minister in charge; I'm just not sure of the time. But I think about 1980, we spent an enormous sum of money renovating it. And since then I think we've . . . I think it's fair to say we have maintained it. We haven't added to it, but we have maintained it.

**Mr. Heppner:** — As I said at the start, this is a fairly short document that we had to deal with, and I'd like to thank you and your officials for giving us this time to get those questions on those five lines answered. Thank you.

Subvote (IA14) agreed to.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — I move we rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

Mr. Chair. Could I just take a moment to thank the officials, who were not here for long. That's true, they did wait actually for about an hour on us to get started and they put a fair amount of time in getting ready for these estimates, so I'd like to thank

these officials for their work today. And also for the ongoing, I think very fine service which the province gets from these officials and from others like them. So I thank them for what they've done today and what they've done throughout the year.

The committee reported progress.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — I move this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — That's carried, and with that may I wish all hon. members an enjoyable weekend at home and a particular enjoyable weekend to the Sergeant-at-Arms, who is celebrating his 50th birthday this weekend.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Could I just take a moment to add government good wishes to the Sergeant-at-Arms. Also like to extend the best wishes to those people of Ukrainian faith, the Catholic Orthodox, right, Ukrainian Orthodox who are celebrating Good Friday today.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well I'd like to extend, on behalf of the official opposition, our best wishes to our Sergeant-at-Arms celebrating his birthday. And as the minister has indicated, for those colleagues who are celebrating Easter this weekend, and for all the people in Saskatchewan who celebrate the Orthodox religion and faith and have Easter this weekend, our traditional Chrystos Voskres.

**The Speaker:** — And I join with the hon. members in extending those best wishes to any member celebrating the Orthodox Easter this weekend. Having said that, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

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