

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Clerk: — It is my duty to advise the Assembly that Mr. Speaker will not be present to open this sitting.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well to present petitions and reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Radville and Lewvan.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

The communities involved, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are Manor and Carlyle. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present and signed from people around Saskatchewan and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

I so present.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Lampman. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I also have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are from Creelman and Stoughton. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents this afternoon as well. The petition deals with the issue of the Plains Health Centre and a moratorium that many people are calling for. These petitioners come from the Radville area of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure again to rise today to present a petition on behalf of the people of this province, and I'd like to 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has signatures on it from the city of Moose Jaw. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise again today to present some petitions . . . or 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 have signed this petition are primarily from Moose Jaw and all throughout the land. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again this afternoon it is my unhappy duty to rise with petitions from citizens of Saskatchewan deeply concerned about the collapse of our health care services under the NDP (New Democratic Party), and about the impending closure of yet more health services in the province. Your petitioners this afternoon come from the communities of Ituna, Hubbard, Homefield, and Kelliher.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also rise with my colleagues on behalf of concerned citizens with respect to the health care system in the province of Saskatchewan, particularly with the closure of the Plains Health Centre. And the petitioners on these documents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from Waldron, Ituna, Stockholm, Melville, and Yorkton. I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of citizens who are seeking justice for men and women who have lost loved ones in work-related accidents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended for the disenfranchised widows, widowers of Saskatchewan whereby their pensions are reinstated and the revoked pensions reimbursed to them retroactively and with interest, as requested by the statement of entitlement presented to the Workers' Compensation Board on October 27, 1997.

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

The signatories on these pages today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from Saskatoon and Delisle.

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

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

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

These all come from the community of Prelate. They're from St. Angela's Academy in south-west Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to take action to allow Steven and Kimberly Walchuk to remain in the custody of their maternal grandparents; to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; to save the Plains Health Centre; to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre; and to have the Workers' Compensation Board reinstate pensions for disenfranchised widows, widowers.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the minister for SaskTel: is SaskTel exempt from challenges in small claims court; if so, by what authority; is there a time limit for farmers to collect crop and related damages from SaskTel?

And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to the rest of my colleagues here in the Assembly and to everybody, 54 students from St. Henry's Junior High in Melville, Saskatchewan sitting in the east gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker, accompanied by their teachers, Garth Gleisinger and Brad Thompson. Welcome. Teacher aid, Mrs. Lynette Unterchute and bus drivers Kim Herbert and Lisa Lovelace.

I'll be meeting with these fine-looking young people at 2:30, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd ask everybody to welcome them here to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure to see so many visitors in the Chamber today and we welcome all of them, but I would particularly like to welcome, on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, a group of students seated in the west gallery. They are a group of 21 students from the Kelsey campus of SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and they are enrolled in the Grade 12 adult upgrading class. They are accompanied by their teachers, Rebecca Lasby, Donna Foulds, and Mark Magnuson.

And I look forward to meeting with them later and will be anxious to hear their comments on what they think about the proceedings. Please join me in extending a warm welcome. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a large number of special guests in the House today. And with the full House they are separated into both the east and west galleries. So I am going to ask them to stand when I call their names.

Vera McKay, Ellen Keewatin, Clara Gibson, Renée Geddes, Jason Morrisseau, Frank Gibson, Kevin Daniels, Shannon Huntinghawk, Millie Hotomai, Cammy Keewatin, Laurel Geddes, Lonnie Geddes, Evelyn Bitternose, Robin Geddes, and Billy McKay. Welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to, through you and to you, to the members of the Assembly introduce, sitting in your west gallery today, 53 grade 5 students from Silverwood Heights School. And accompanying them today are their teachers, Ms. Barbara Wright and Ms. Doris Ritter. Chaperons Ms. Siemens, Ms. Milne, Ms. Hill-Hampson, Ms. Zerr and Ms. Doering. I would like the Chamber to welcome them today. I will be meeting with them at 2:30 to answer their questions and later we will have a photo. So again, I want to welcome the grade 5 students from Silverwood here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, some special guests in your gallery. And I ask each one of them to stand. Each one of these individuals has suffered a great loss. These are members of the disenfranchised widows and widowers of Saskatchewan.

And I call upon Rose Polsom, Judy Millard, Zena Paquin, Eleanor Berg, Elmer Berg, Ruby Burlock, Pat Lang, Bernice McCabe, Juliane Frey, Laurine Davidson, Stella Mihalcea, Ruth Hordal, Joyce Babiak, Mary Aspen, Ruth Fahselt, Pat Gwilliam, Adeline Oystreck, Helen MacFarlane, Monique Fisher, Jean Martin, Jan Werbenuk, Shirley Oats, and Helen Schmidt.

I ask everyone to please give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to this Assembly, two constituents of mine from Unity seated in your gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ed and Betty Krips are visiting here, touring Saskatchewan, and enjoying their retirement. Please welcome them here. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the House, a large group of grade 12 students seated in your gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This group of 38 grade 12 students come from the community of Canora. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Larry Neufeld and Mr. Merv Tomski, and probably the most important person of the day, their bus driver, Mr. Don Probe.

I know they have a busy day in the city of Regina and I'm glad to see that they've taken some time to come to the legislature and view the proceedings. And I look forward to the meeting with you immediately after question period. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley in welcoming the students from Kelsey, many of whom would live in my riding.

And also one of their instructors, Rebecca Lasby, because it just so happens that we attended law school together and next year will be the 20th anniversary of our graduation. And I didn't know Rebecca was a teacher but I'm sure that when our classmates learn that I became a politician and she became a teacher, they will be very proud of Rebecca — and I welcome her today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very happy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to introduce to you and through you today a group of 24 students from Prelate, Saskatchewan, St. Angela's Academy — one of the very few all-girl schools in our province. They are led today of course, by their teachers, Ms. Lana Steckler and Sister Pauline Reinhardt and I'm very happy that they're here as well.

I want you to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the last time I visited with these young ladies they impressed me with their ability not to mince words when they give their opinion, basically on the unity of Canada question at that time. They were very forthright in telling us exactly how to run the country and what they thought about it. And I'm sure that they will learn more about the political process as they visit with us here today.

I'd be happy to meet with them later, and hamburgers go with the drinks if you want them. So welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, I'd like to join with my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena in welcoming her guests, and in fact the entire amount of guests we have today.

But I want to especially welcome the aboriginal guests we have in the Assembly in both the east and west wing. I do want to say that I always take a special effort . . . make a special effort to welcome all the aboriginal people to the Assembly here. It's very good to see that you are interested.

And I must say that there are two aboriginal MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in the Assembly. And given the demographics and the population, we hope to see many more. And of course the one on this side is the better one.

And I also encourage you to continue to take an interest in politics and good luck in your future. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleague from Saskatoon Greystone in welcoming the group that she introduced, the disenfranchised widows.

When I learned they were coming today, which was at about 11:30 this morning, we took steps to arrange a meeting room. And I want to take advantage of this opportunity to tell the group that if they want to meet me, I've arranged a room, in room 10, which is in the basement of this building. And I'd be pleased to meet them then.

And I would like to add my welcome and those of my colleagues to their visit to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sporting Events in Regina

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past weekend in Regina I was pleased to participate at the official opening of two sporting events here in the city.

On Saturday morning I represented the minister responsible for sport, recreation and culture at Saskatchewan's first provincial tournament for Sepak Takraw. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sepak Takraw, for those who have not heard, is a gymnasium sport which involves three persons per side which is played much like volleyball except you can't use your hands or your arms. So it's an interesting sport and was very entertaining.

Congratulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to Mr. Rick Engel and the Asian sport, cultural and recreation society for bringing in this tournament and introducing this exciting sport here to Regina and to Saskatchewan.

On Sunday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to represent the government at the official ceremonies for the opening of the 38th season of the Columbus Baseball League.

Congratulations should go out to Mr. Joseph Zerr, president of Columbus Park here in Regina, and the Knights of Columbus for their work and efforts in providing this program in the last 38 years, which this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, involves over 900 baseball players at the mosquito, beaver, and midget age groups. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Free Vote to Save the Plains

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last night the leader of the Saskatchewan Party attended a Save the Plains meeting in Moose Jaw, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the people of Saskatchewan want the Premier to allow a free vote on the future of the Plains. They want their elected representatives to stand in the House and vote for them on this very important issue. They want this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they know that if the members that they elected represented their concerns and not the government, they could save the Plains — that is the power of democracy.

But instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those members chose to stand in this House and muzzle the democratic will of the people by cutting off the debate yesterday. Regina MLAs, including those

from Victoria, Wascana Plains, Sherwood, Qu'Appelle Valley, and Dewdney, along with their rural counterparts from Weyburn, Swift Current, and Moose Jaw, refuse to take responsibility for this tragic decision by allowing a motion to save the Plains to come to a vote. Not surprisingly, many members, including five out of six Liberal members, chose not to participate in the vote at all.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can consider this their warning — they can run but they can't hide. The Saskatchewan Party vows to hold the NDP accountable for this decision by putting forward this motion calling for a free vote on the future of the Plains every week until the end of session. And as a fine gentleman told the Minister of Health last night at the close of the meeting, close the hospital and the electorate will hold you accountable at the next election.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Second Annual Youth Business Excellence Awards Ceremony

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you. I would like to congratulate two young entrepreneurs in my constituency who were winners at the second annual Youth Business Excellence Awards ceremony recently held in North Battleford. The first place winner in the individual student competition was Amanda Frantic of Unity. Amanda runs a business called Frantic Snacks, which keeps the Unity Wheat Pool staff content with delicious muffin treats. Second place in this category went to Curtis Ferguson of the Highgate area west of Battleford. Curtis manages Ferguson Sheep Products and was also the winner of the award for successful problem solving.

Sixty-three entries were judged by the North West Regional College business class, with first-place entries receiving \$400 prizes and second-place entries winning \$200 prizes. The schools associated with each winner were also presented with plaques. These two young people are exciting examples of how imaginative, creative, and industrious our Saskatchewan youth are. They are also proof that there are areas of need in the market-place that can be identified and turned into a prosperous operation.

I would like to wish Amanda and Curtis and all of our young entrepreneurs all the best in their business ventures, and commend them for their contribution to Saskatchewan's economy. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Termination of Saskatchewan Party Researcher

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the sake of the Tory members who sit in this legislature I have some good news. I've learned there is no threat to labour peace at the Regina *Leader Post* and Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*. Now you might ask why is this so important? Well on a daily basis the Tories have demonstrated that their research — it appears their only form of research — comes from our major daily newspapers. Every day in this House the

Tories raise issues which are picked right from the headlines of the *Leader Post* and *Star-Phoenix*.

But to give them some credit, they are attempting to address the situation. We learned yesterday that Mr. Hermanson, who had been hired as a researcher, was terminated before his probation was up. Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do apologize to the Tories for using the word probation. I know that is one word they don't like to hear.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Waseca Residents Honoured for Volunteer Work

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two Waseca residents, friends of mine, Helena Pike and Bob Douglas, were recently honoured by the Waseca Recreation Board for their volunteer work.

Helena taught in Waseca from 1954 to 1981. Helena has always been community minded, but particularly active since her retirement. She's helped to organize picnics, ice fun days, bike rodeos, walkathons, fall fairs, and homecomings. She really has done it all — from MC (Master of Ceremonies) to dishwasher, as one board member put it. Helena has also worked on the town's history book and been a member of both the heritage committee and the historical society.

Bob Douglas is also very deserving of public recognition for his volunteer work. Bob has been deputy mayor, served on the school board, been part of the 4-H beef club, the Kinsmen, K-40, was a little league coach, also a member of the Maidstone Housing Authority, and the credit union board, volunteer fire department, and the list goes on. Bob was also chairman of the Waseca Recreation Board for 14 years and a member for 17 years.

Mr. Speaker, to say that Helena Pike and Bob Douglas are dedicated, community-minded volunteers is an understatement. They have obviously given a great deal of time and effort to the community of Waseca and communities around Waseca, including Maidstone. I would like to add my voice to the many others who congratulate Helena and Bob on their dedication to the Waseca and Maidstone area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Conduct of Chairman of Channel Lake Inquiry

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as most members of the legislature know, it usually take a lot to make me blush. But my cheeks were red as ripe apples last week when I heard the chairman of Crown Corporations Committee use some pretty unfathomable language.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the chairman's words were in poor taste and very unprofessional, but strictly speaking it didn't break any laws.

However, I thought I better take this opportunity to warn that member to watch her step, and particularly her mouth, if she's ever travelling . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Van Mulligen): — Order. Order, order. I don't think that it's appropriate for the member to question the conduct of any of the presiding officers during the course of members' statements. The member and his colleagues will have recourse, if there are concerns about the conduct of a Chair or any presiding officer, to raise those issues and to raise those questions through substantive motion in the appropriate body; and in that case, it would be the committee in question. It is not appropriate to raise them in the way that the member has done.

Remembrance Day Contest Winners

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Jonathan Hoddenbagh is a budding 14-year-old poet in my constituency. Jonathan was a runner-up in a nationwide poetry contest which was organized by the Royal Canadian Legion to commemorate Remembrance Day. Jonathan's poem won first place in the zone, district, and provincial levels. His poem, entitled "So Much More," beat out 500 poems from Meadow Lake schools alone, and as I said, he then went on to finish second nationally.

Jonathan isn't the only new literary and artist . . . literary figure and artist in my constituency. There were competitions for poetry, art work, and essays for three age categories in the legion's Remembrance Day contest.

Sherree Dallyn earned a first place finish at the zone level for her poster and a second place finish for her poem. Virginia Scissons also had a first place poster and first place poem at the senior level of the competition. Marlayna Rutzki placed first in the zone at the intermediate level for her poster. Alanna Warner finished first at the junior level for her poster. And Ashley Livingston finished first in the zone junior poem competition.

Alana Singer, Kelsi Dalke, and Peter Weyenberg also did very well at the zone competitions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all poets, artists, and essayists who competed and wish them the best of luck in developing their talents in the future. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Member Cited in *Globe & Mail* Article

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today to members' statements to make a statement of a very important part and cog of our caucus — a man that we have only known for a few short months, but we must pay tribute to today. And the man that we're speaking about, nonetheless, is my hon. colleague from North Battleford, who has done a tremendous amount of work on behalf of the Liberal cause, and certainly on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

And now his fame — his fame is now spread across the country, Mr. Speaker. And I quote from *The Globe and Mail* of May 7, 1998.

Part of the reason (and the reason I refer to is the Liberal strength) . . . Part of the reason is that Jack Hillson, a

lawyer from North Battleford, is among the brightest and most articulate of MLAs, the only one who can match Premier Roy Romanow's savvy and sophistication in legislative debates.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we realize that we're amongst greatness in this caucus and that it's very important to note that if you are down and out, to the member from North Battleford, we'll offer you lunch. If you oppose him, do not give him a break because he'll take away your lunch.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a colleague of mine, the member from North Battleford. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Release of Murder Suspect

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, today in the legislature we are joined by the family and friends of Riel Morriseau. Riel's life was cut short on Easter Sunday in a violent murder here in Regina. Not only has Riel's family had to deal with this terrible tragedy, but his family and the families of the other victims who were assaulted are devastated and they're living in fear. They believe the justice system is failing them. Like so many others, they see a revolving door justice system that pays more attention to the rights of the accused than the rights of the victim.

Mr. Minister, after a Canada-wide manhunt by police, one of the accused, Rami Bellegarde, was arrested in Alberta, only to be released a few days later. He has now been re-arrested and charged with assault following an incident this past weekend.

Mr. Minister, Riel Morriseau's family has a question for you. Why was Rami Bellegarde released after being charged with second-degree murder and four cases of attempted murder?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much for that question. As the member well knows, there is no possibility that I can make any comment on a specific case. But what I can say is that we in Canada have a justice system of which we should be proud and it provides for the various checks and balances that are needed to deal with matters that are before the courts.

And in this particular area there are many times that we need to look carefully at what the court has said and done and an attempt to deal with it that way. But our goal in this province is to have a justice system that works at protecting the public, and that's the goal that we're working toward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I do understand that the decision to release accused murderers is ultimately the decision of the court. But there have been some very questionable decisions made in the recent days — the one in Melville the other day and

now this one.

The Manitoba Department of Justice recently took steps to address this problem by providing Crown prosecutors and the police with greater resources and more tools to oppose bail for serious, violent, and gang-related offences. These changes were announced on April 29.

Mr. Minister, have you reviewed the steps the Manitoba government is taking to oppose bail for serious, violent offences, and will you implement similar procedures here in Saskatchewan so that accused murderers aren't back on the street just days after their arrest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We work closely with our colleagues right across the country, and the various pieces of legislation that are introduced in other jurisdictions are reviewed carefully when they're presented. We also look at the policies.

What I would say is that here in Saskatchewan, we have announced in our budget this year, and I have made a number of ministerial statements about, the extra support that we're providing to prosecutors and police to deal with serious crime, and especially as it relates to gang-related offences.

And so we're very proud of that initiative which we're doing in cooperation with the police forces throughout Saskatchewan. We're adding money to the prosecutions division to make sure that we have senior prosecutors working on the kinds of cases that you're talking about.

This government is very concerned about protection of the public and we will be continuing to do all of the things that we need to to support our police and our prosecutors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the family of Riel Morriseau wants to make one thing very clear — the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the city police are doing an excellent job. It's the rest of the justice system that's failing them.

The RCMP issued Canada-wide warrants for the five accused murderers and they have arrested all five. They arrested Rami Bellegarde in Alberta. They brought him back to Regina and they brought him into the court.

And our revolving door justice system put him back on the streets, only to be accused of another violent assault in just a few days. That's a slap in the face for the RCMP; it's a slap in the face to Riel's family — to his mother, to his wife, and to his seven-year-old daughter.

Mr. Minister, what procedures are you putting in place to make sure this doesn't happen again? And what tools are you giving the police and the Crown prosecutors to help them oppose bail for serious crimes like murder?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As I explained previously, we have been putting money into the various things that are being done with the police and the prosecutors. We have a justice system in Saskatchewan which deals with many, many difficult cases on a day-to-day basis. And practically, what we need to do is continue to provide the support to our police, our prosecutors, and our courts, as they deal with some of the most difficult questions in our society. But it's very clear that our government's position and our main concern is protection of the public. And we will continue to work very hard at that objective.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Changes to Trucking Industry Policies

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question today is for the minister responsible for Highways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we all know, Saskatchewan highways are in a state of disrepair. Many residents no longer feel our highways and our national . . . now a national organization is expressing its concern about this government's intentions. The Canadians for Responsible and Safe Highways today issued a press release expressing concern about the NDP's plans to allow semis with two 48- to 53-foot trailers on Saskatchewan's two-lane highways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we certainly understand the economic reasons truckers would want this change, we are also concerned about the safety aspect. We are hearing of more and more accidents on Saskatchewan highways involving semis, including one recently in my own riding.

Madam Minister, can you tell us if your department is planning on making these changes?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to answer this question. One of the objectives which we've had in our transportation policy is to make sure that our highways are in the best of condition, but also to make sure that the vehicles and the trucking industry that is using that, that we do have good agreements.

One of the pieces in which we are working on is trucking partnership agreements. And in that there will be allowed longer vehicles on some of our highways under certain conditions. These conditions will be then, where it's concluded, to be on our two-lane highways, will be in restricted times between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. We're working on this. We actually did a pilot study on this. And also at reduced speeds. And what that does is help remove the trucks from the busier times of day to a time when it will be safer, and both beat the economic advantage for the trucking industry but also helps to make our highways safer to the public using those highways.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Madam Minister, safety is a prime worry for Saskatchewan residents, especially given the number of accidents on Saskatchewan highways these days.

One can hardly blame them for being concerned when they hear semis with larger and larger trailers, larger than other provinces and the United States, are going to be allowed and are going to be appearing on our already crumbling highway system.

Madam Minister, has your department conducted any studies regarding how this move will affect safety on our highways? And if not, why not?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — One of the factors in this was to keep the trucking industry competitive in the province, but also to make sure that our highways are as safe as possible. We, over the past 18 months, we actually did a pilot project with Kindersley Transport.

With that project, we released the study — and we had the approval of both CAA (Canadian Automobile Association), the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, and the department, and the trucking industry on this — and what the study showed, that during the 200 trips, there were no accidents and no complaints from the motoring public.

And after, when we looked at the study, they suggested from the study that we should actually go from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. We actually then moved that back from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. to look at a time when the highways are not used as much. And these will all be under an agreement in which the record of the trucking firm will have to be looked at, all of the safety factors will be there.

We're talking about increased trucking in our province but to make that as safe as possible for the public.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Foster Parent Recruitment

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Social Services or his designate.

Mr. Minister, there was a very unusual ad in the help wanted section of the classified ads in today's *Leader-Post*. It appears the Department of Social Services is advertising for foster parents for two teenage boys in the *Leader-Post* classified ads.

Mr. Minister, this isn't a couple of puppies you're trying to give away here. It's children. And we're just wondering if this is the best way to find foster homes.

Mr. Minister, is this a new procedure? Is this a good way of finding foster parents? And does this indicate that Social Services is experiencing a shortage of foster homes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question and I will take notice of the question.

Regina Hospital Bed Numbers

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have a couple of very simple questions for the Minister of

Health. Mr. Minister, the Atkinson report, which was released in April of 1992, concluded that the appropriate number of acute care beds for the city of Regina was 966. The study was conducted before your government closed down 53 rural hospitals, many of those in southern Saskatchewan, which has put even more pressure on the Regina system.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, is can he explain why we have only two-thirds as many beds in Regina today as the Atkinson report recommended in 1992?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the language that we are prepared to use in public debate is very revealing as to our underlying motivation — whether we have a political axe to grind or whether we are truly concerned about the welfare of our fellow citizens.

It's been brought to our attention that on two occasions last night in Moose Jaw at the Liberal meeting, Darlene Sterling, sharing the platform with Dr. Melenchuk, other Liberals, and Elwin Hermanson, Leader of the Conservative Party, stated that it was "unfortunate that no one has died" because of health care changes.

I am told that she went on to say that if someone had died as a result of health care changes, it would be easier to pursue the opposition agenda on health care. And I want to sincerely ask the Liberal Party, and the Conservative Party while I'm at it, this question: has your political agenda come to assume more importance than the lives and welfare of the people of this province? Do you feel it is unfortunate that no one has died because of health care changes and do you subscribe to this reprehensible and irresponsible point of view?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Evidently the Minister of Finance doesn't understand health care very well so I'll ask him the question again. The Regina Health District's Toward 2000 strategy also concluded there should be 764 acute care beds at the end of the consolidation process. Minutes from a January 1996 meeting of the board stated and I quote: "The district is targeting a total of 734 beds at the Pasqua and the Regina General Hospital sites at the time of closure."

Mr. Minister of Finance, can you explain to us then why we still only have 675 beds in the system today?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Liberal Party understood care and compassion, the Liberal Party would, instead of engaging in fearmongering about health care day after day, tell the people the truth. The Liberal Party would tell the people that while there are 250,000 square feet in the Plains hospital, there are 480,000 square feet of hospital space that are being added to the Pasqua Hospital and to the General Hospital in the city of Regina.

All of the staff and services at the Plains hospital will be consolidated into two locations, Mr. Speaker. None of the beds will be lost as a result of that consolidation. And I say to the Liberal Party, stop talking about being sorry that no one has died because of health care reform. Disassociate yourselves from those irresponsible statements. Stop fearmongering about

health care, because I say to the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party this, Mr. Speaker: we have one of the finest health care systems on the face of this earth and . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Van Mulligen): — Order, order.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance still won't answer the question so I'll give him the answer to the questions that I asked. The reason that we have 675 acute care beds in Regina today is because that is all this government is willing to fund. Bean counters from that government's side have determined 675 is an appropriate number of beds.

The number is not based on need or common sense, it's based on dollars and cents. And what is the result? Day in and day out we hear that there are not enough beds in the city to serve the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan. Mr. Premier, you continue to say there will be no fewer beds in the system if the Plains is allowed to close. But the fact remains there aren't enough beds in the system now and the obvious solution is the Plains hospital.

Free vote or no free vote, the only person with the power to halt the closure of the Plains is you, Mr. Premier. Will you swallow your pride, admit you made a mistake, and place a moratorium on its closure today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to ask the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why this member, in response to my first response to him, has not disassociated himself with statements made on the Liberal platform in Moose Jaw last night, that it is unfortunate that no one has died in the health care system as a result of the government's policies. I want to ask that member why Dr. Melenchuk, who is a medical professional, Mr. Deputy Speaker, along with Ms. Sterling, who is a registered nurse, why Dr. Melenchuk, who had the opportunity to speak several times last night after that statement was made, did not disassociate himself from that statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to ask the Liberal party when emotional rhetoric is going to end and rational discussion about health care is going to begin in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Board Pension Benefits

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On April 8, I asked the Minister of Labour if his government will restore pension benefits to the Saskatchewan widows and widowers who lost their spouses in work-related accidents and then had their pensions denied because of remarriage. The minister replied that he was awaiting a report from the Workers' Compensation Board, including an estimate of the costs involved, and that he would then take the matter to cabinet with a recommendation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Minister, since you now have that report in hand, including the actuary, it appears that the only hold-up is at the cabinet table. When will these widows and widowers get a definitive answer from your government?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the member will know that this is the third round we've had on this and that I have informally kept her informed of the progress of this particular file. She will know, because I told her, that we have now received the final actuarial numbers and the matter will proceed through government processes like any other decision, like any other policy decision of its type.

I am not at liberty to tell the member, nor should I, whether or not it is at cabinet. I will tell her though that there is no attempt to slow-walk this. We are trying to push it through the system with as much dispatch as we can and we will be announcing a decision as soon as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On April 27, the — 22nd, pardon me — the Minister of Labour stated, and I'm going to paraphrase this lengthy response.

I'm awaiting a report from the Workers' Compensation Board and the actuarial experts advising the board. When this information is in hand, we will decide on this important question of policy, and if it requires legislative amendment, then that will follow.

Mr. Minister, this issue is about justice. This issue is about being honourable. This is about security for people, many of whom are elderly and are in need. Now please tell them specifics today, and assure them that if legislative amendment is required that it will occur in this session.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member knows perfectly well when she asks that question what the answer has to be. It is a repeat of the answer I gave earlier.

The government has the information in hand now. We have a process, as has any other democratically elected government, to decide policy issues and that process is being followed here with all due dispatch. I am not able to give her any undertaking about legislation or anything like that until the government has decided this important policy question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government's past behaviour has not eluded these widows. They worry that the government will do to them exactly what it did when it delayed and delayed and delayed settling with parents who had acted in accordance with the government's own law and paid benefits to their babysitters.

Mr. Minister, you said on April 8 that the Worker's Compensation Board is, and I quote, "in a very strong financial position." It took you a year — a year — for your government's due dispatch to correct your mistake with the babysitters fiasco.

You now have an opportunity to demonstrate that you can take more prompt action with the disenfranchised widows and correct a great wrong.

Will you give much greater specifics, please. You don't have to

give a deadline. For goodness sake, just tell these people that what they were told in October and December and January and February and April is actually finally going to result in something.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the member is obviously playing politics with this very important issue — obviously. She wouldn't be coming at me over and over again with the same question in light of the answers that I have given.

I have been as open and direct as I possibly can with respect to this issue. I have concealed nothing. If I had anything more that I could possibly say as a minister of the Crown, I would be saying it. The member knows that; other members of the legislature know it. A decision will be forthcoming as soon as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Used Oil Recycling Charge

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Resource Management or his designate.

Mr. Minister, farmers across Saskatchewan are gearing up for another year. In many areas spring seeding is already under way or finishing. And one of the things farmers do in preparation for seeding is change oil in their trucks and tractors. Mr. Minister, that's where we run into a problem — what do they do with the used oil?

Last year the Saskatchewan Association for Resource Recovery announced a province-wide, used oil recycling program in conjunction with Sask Environment. The plan was to place an environmental charge on oil sales and then use the money to establish 30 recycling centres. Well, Mr. Minister, you've been collecting the money for eight months but we don't see any recycling centres.

Mr. Minister, how much money has been collected from the environmental charge on oil, and if the money isn't being used to set up recycling centres, what are you doing with it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to answer on behalf of the minister.

As you will know, all people, whether in the agri business or in industry across this province, are very concerned and interested in how we manage recycling and how we manage our environment. And I think the farming community, it's safe to say, is very much in tune with good environmental stewardship, whether it be the way they manage the cultivation of their land or whether they be involved in a recycling program with used oil. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the forest industry has become very much aware of the impact of used oil in the forest areas.

The government is putting, and will continue to put, in place programs where recycling — whether it be oil or whether it be empty containers and cartons — we're putting in place

recycling systems that will help to maintain and protect our environment. And I want to say that on behalf of the Minister of Environment, his department and he will continue to work with his department, with the agricultural sector and with industry, to ensure that we do the appropriate environmental stewardship here in Saskatchewan.

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I preface my remarks by saying to the Minister of Finance, my understanding is that the unfortunate woman last night made a slip of the tongue. She meant to say, it is fortunate no one has died, not unfortunate. And I don't know why he has to make such a big deal about an unfortunate slip of the tongue. It's been known to happen on that side too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay. Mr. Deputy Speaker, from day one we have been told all along, until yesterday, that Channel Lake was set up in order to supply SaskPower with natural gas. Yesterday we were told that in point of fact it has sold virtually no gas to SaskPower from day one, or ever, notwithstanding the fact that the gas fields are very close to the Many Islands' pipeline coming into our system.

What is going on? The government now has before us a Bill to lessen ministerial responsibility. Channel Lake happened because of a breakdown in ministerial responsibility. Will the minister confirm that what we need is not less responsibility but more?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member I think in vain tries to defend statements made at a meeting in Moose Jaw last night and I give him credit to trying to do that, but it's a huge failure. And if I were you, sir, and running for leadership, I would stay out of that part of the issue.

But I want to say as well that the committee, which was not supported by members of the Conservative Party in the initial stages, is I think, working very well. And there are many people in the public who are saying now, having watched the process — and I give credit to all members of the committee — are saying that in fact members of this legislature can do the kind of work that looks at an issue like Channel Lake.

Now I say again to the member opposite, when you are writing your report based on the questions that have been asked, I'm sure that all of the issues that you would like to deal with will be included in that report. So I urge you again, be patient. Ask the questions, as you're doing. And in the writing of the report, exercise your influence and make sure those kind of issues are included.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 222 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1998 (Justice System Review)

Mr. Heppner: — I move that Bill No. 222, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1998 (Justice System Review) be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 58 — The Adoption Act, 1998/ Loi de 1998 sur l'adoption

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 58, The Adoption Act, 1998 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I have several copies of answers to written question no. 62 which I'm pleased to present to this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Van Mulligen): — The answer has been tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 41 — The Teachers' Dental Plan Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to outline the purpose and the main provisions of these amendments to The Teachers' Dental Plan Act. The teachers' dental plan is one of the topics covered by provincial collective bargaining for teachers.

Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago Saskatchewan teachers ratified a new collective agreement for the period January 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999. The collective agreement includes a number of enhancements and revisions to the teachers' dental plan. One of these changes requires an amendment to the statute, while the other changes do not involve the legislation but only the various plan documents.

Mr. Speaker, the one substantial amendment to the Act relates to the point at which teachers become eligible for dental benefits. The amendments affect two groups of teachers.

First, teachers on a continuing contract of employment will now be eligible to submit claims for dental plan benefits once they've completed 20 days of service rather than waiting 50 days.

(1430)

Second, all teachers on a temporary contract will now become eligible for benefits, since 20 days is the minimum length of a temporary contract. Until now, temporary teachers have not qualified for benefits unless their contract was for at least 50

teaching days.

There are also a number of housekeeping amendments which simply update references to other statutes and incorporate general neutral language.

As I stated at the start of my remarks, these amendments are needed to implement the provisions of the new collective agreement relating to the teachers' dental plan. I'm therefore pleased to move, Mr. Speaker, that Bill No. 41, An Act to amend The Teachers' Dental Plan Act be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Deputy, thank you — Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. Just a couple of comments in regards to the comments that the minister has made regarding Bill No. 41.

We've looked at the Bill and in general we really don't have a lot of problems with that. I think it basically meets some requirements, and the Bill basically brings the Act into line with a collective bargaining agreement. And we feel that we would have more than adequate opportunity to ask any questions, particular questions dealing with this, in Committee of the Whole; so we're prepared to move this Bill forward.

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

**Bill No. 42 — The Teachers' Life Insurance
(Government Contributory) Amendment Act, 1998**

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. I'm pleased to outline the purpose and the main provision for these amendments to The Teachers' Life Insurance (Government Contributory) Act. The teachers' group life insurance plan is one of the topics covered by provincial collective bargaining for teachers.

Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago Saskatchewan teachers ratified a new provincial collective agreement for the period January 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999. The collective agreement incorporated the change to the teachers' group life insurance plan which necessitates amendments to the statute.

This change relates to the point at which teachers become eligible for coverage under the plan. Until now, teachers on a temporary contract of employment have not been eligible for coverage unless the contract was for at least 50 teaching days. This threshold is being reduced to 20 days. All teachers on a temporary contract will now become eligible for benefits, since 20 days is the minimum length for a temporary contract. There are also a number of housekeeping amendments in the Bill which simply update references to other statutes.

As I stated at the start of my remarks, these amendments are needed to implement the provisions of the new collective agreement relating to the teacher's group life insurance plan. I'm therefore pleased to move that Bill No. 42, An Act to amend The Teachers' Life Insurance (Government Contributory) Act now be read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker.

Regarding Bill No. 42, this again follows a lot of the agreements that have already been arrived at with the teachers and we are quite confident that we'll have our questions answered at the appropriate time in Committee of the Whole and we're more than prepared to move this Bill to committee as well.

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

**Bill No. 53 — The Teachers Superannuation
and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 1998**

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to outline the purpose and main provisions of this Bill for all members of the Assembly.

This is the third of three Bills required in this session to implement provisions of the new provincial collective bargaining agreement for teachers. Bills dealing with the teachers' dental plan and the teachers' life insurance plan have already been introduced.

The teachers' superannuation is one of the mandatory items for negotiation in provincial teacher bargaining. Because most of the terms and conditions of the superannuation plan are spelled out in detail in the statute, any provisions or revisions to the plan invariably require legislative amendments.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, I should explain that there are two superannuation plans for teachers in Saskatchewan. The teachers' superannuation plan administered by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission applies to teachers who began teaching in the province before 1980. Teachers who have begun teaching since 1980 belong to the Saskatchewan teachers retirement plan, which is administered by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

The statute with which we are dealing today governs only the teachers' superannuation plan and affects only the teachers who belong to the plan. The terms and conditions of the Saskatchewan teachers retirement plan are under the jurisdiction of the teachers' federation and are not negotiated in provincial bargaining.

The new 1997 to 1999 provincial collective agreement includes a number of provisions which require changes to the Act. These provisions can be divided into two main categories. First there are a series of provisions which were brought to the attention of the bargaining committees by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission and which were subsequently agreed to in the negotiations. The amendments in this category address these three objectives.

First, they ensure that the provisions of the Act are fully in compliance with the requirements of federal income tax legislation. Such compliance is necessary for the plan to maintain its registered status with federal authorities. For example, teachers will now be required to voluntarily withdraw their money from the voluntary contributions fund in the year they turn 69 rather than 71, because federal regulations governing registered retirement savings plans have been revised in this way.

Second, the amendments eliminate some anomalies and inequities in the existing rules and practices that the commission is required to follow in administering the plan. For example, there are currently circumstances in which the plan is unable to include interest when refunding a teacher's pension contributions. There are also circumstances in which there is no authority to pay out all of the teacher's own contribution and interest in the form of an allowance or lump sum payment.

These problems are being corrected so that in all cases, the minimum amount that a teacher or the teacher's family or estate will receive is the teacher's personal contributions plus the interest on the? How busy is this department of amendments in this category correct some errors and ambiguities that have been identified in the current wording of some divisions of the Act.

The second major category and amendment in this Bill includes matters which were negotiated by the parties to address the interests of teachers and matters of mutual concern. I will identify the key amendments in this category.

First, teachers will now be able to purchase up to one year of leave on a deferred salary leave plan for pension purposes. This new provision parallels existing provisions for the purchase of sabbatical leave, educational leave, and parenting leave. Teachers who wish to have deferred salary leave counted towards their pension will be required to make the appropriate contributions, which will be matched by the government in the usual way. In other words, the teacher will be treated for pension purposes as though he or she had been teaching during the period of time involved. This new provision will not affect a large number of teachers in that there is no provincial deferred salary leave plan for teachers and there have been relatively few at the local level. Nevertheless, where such arrangements exist or have existed, it is considered appropriate to treat the leaves in the same way as other leaves of absence for pension purposes.

The second amendment in this category will benefit some teachers who cease teaching before they're eligible for a pension. These teachers will now be able to transfer the commuted value of their future pension to a private retirement scheme instead of being required to leave their money in the superannuation plan. Given the structure of the plan, some teachers will find it financially advantageous to make use of this new provision. There is no additional cost to the plan itself.

Finally, the rules regarding retired teachers who return to teach are being revised. At present, a retired teacher can teach up to 120 days in any school year following retirement before any reduction is made in the teacher's pension. The 120 day limit will remain in place with respect to the school year in which a teacher's pension begins. However, for all subsequent years the limit is reduced to 60 days. The new rules are intended to reflect the balance of interests. On the one hand, boards of education will still be able to hire retired teachers for reasonable periods of time to meet short-term needs such as substitute teachers or temporary contracts if other teachers are simply not available.

Sixty teaching days, which is the equivalent of three months of the school year, should cover the vast majority of cases. On the other hand, the new restrictions will help to ensure that retired teachers do not return to teach for unreasonable periods of time, thereby denying employment opportunities to young teachers

beginning their careers.

As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, all of the amendments in this Bill are required as a result of the new provincial collective agreement with teachers. It is important that the necessary amendments be passed now in order that they'll be in place by July 1, 1998, the date on which they take effect.

I am therefore pleased to move, Mr. Speaker, that Bill No. 53, An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to respond to the minister's comments and the fact that here again we have a situation where the minister is addressing a number of concerns that have been brought forward as a result of provincial bargaining; and the fact that a number of the concerns that the minister is talking about, I know teachers, superannuated teachers, have chatted with me on a number of these issues, and I am pleased to hear and to see that the minister and her department are responding.

It's appropriate. It's an issue that is very important, given I believe, the fact that superannuated teachers have the opportunity to take their pension and to manage it privately. It was important to some. To some it won't be all that important.

But the fact is that these three Bills before the Assembly this afternoon are addressing a number of concerns that have been raised by teachers for a number of years. And with that in mind, I don't see why we should hold the Bills up.

One of the things I really wanted to note, because it's been raised on many occasions, is the fact that if a person takes a leave for a period of time, that they have the opportunity to make that contribution up and that their pension plan is not affected as long as they make the contribution. And I believe, as the minister indicated, this current Bill does make that provision. I think that's appropriate.

So, Mr. Speaker, in regards to any particular questions regarding the Bill, I believe we can address those probably more accurately and appropriately in Committee of the Whole rather than debating an issue that most people generally agree with, especially the individuals who will be affected by the legislation before us.

Therefore I suggest that we're more than prepared to allow this Bill to proceed to committee.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 27

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Calvert that **Bill No. 27 — The Public Service Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a number of concerns related to Bill No. 27, The Public Service Act, 1998. It allows for the Public Service Commission to delegate its responsibilities and its duties to whoever it likes with no significant oversight. It provides for affirmative action programs within the public service. At a time that it gives special privileges to other groups, it removes recognition for service for war veterans and I think that that's something that we all should be very concerned about in this legislature.

It gives unions a type of, or a sort of, veto over any regulations before they are passed. And again, I think that outside of the elected Assembly here, we should not be providing that kind of veto to anyone. It is the Assembly here that should be making the laws and not anyone else.

We will want to review all negative aspects contained within this Bill in detail in committee before this Bill is passed, but we'll ask those questions in the appropriate form, which is committee.

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

(1445)

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 29 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Bill No. 29, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 1998 there are certainly — as all members of this legislature will know — a lot of concerns regarding the operations of the Workers' Compensation Board, both from people who are injured on the job and from employers who pay the bills for Workers' Compensation.

I think within my office — and I suspect that my office is not unique, MLA office that is; I suspect that many, many members are dealing on an ongoing basis with the considerable number of Workers' Compensation concerns — the file seems to grow larger and larger, rather than smaller and smaller, as it should be.

Injured workers are a fact, unfortunately, of life. But nevertheless the Workers' Compensation Board seems to have taken rather backward steps in dealing with some of these issues surrounding injured workers. We are constantly inundated within our opposition office, and I'm sure members opposite are the same way, about worker-related injuries in this province.

First and foremost, any changes that are made to The Workers' Compensation Act must in the end, promote both fairness for the injured worker and for the employer. A year or so ago we saw 52 recommendations brought forward by a review panel. This review . . . this legislation deals with very, very few of those recommendations that were brought forward.

Among the things that it does, it enshrines the benefit of the

doubt clause in the legislation, expands the definition of injury to include a disabling or potentially disabling condition caused by an occupational disease, increases lump sum annuity payments to \$20,000 from the current \$5,000, and offers pension contributions to surviving spouses who are currently receiving benefits.

Many of the complaints that we get about the Worker's Compensation Board deal with the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) refusing to take into consideration the word of a family doctor or other physician outside of the auspices of the WCB. Does the benefit of doubt clause have anything to do to remedy this situation? And we're concerned about that.

In the last few years, calls to our office from workers who find themselves now unfortunately involved in Workers' Compensation through injury have increased significantly. Some of the people who call our office have been so discouraged by the treatment they have received that they have become convinced that, for whatever reason, the Workers' Compensation Board has a vendetta against them.

And you only have to look towards the rally that was held last spring down in the park downtown here, where Workers' Compensation victims were coming forward and reciting story after story, concern after concern, about the plight of themselves and how Workers Compensation, the Workers' Compensation Board, hasn't been dealing with them in a straight-up fashion. And there's lots of concern about this type of thing.

While I don't see that there are certainly any conspiracies against injured workers, I think it's obvious to many who are caught in . . . that many are caught in a bureaucratic web. I don't see very much, unfortunately, in this Bill that will go very far in reducing the bureaucratic tangle that some people are constantly finding themselves in when it comes to the operations of the WCB.

We have to treat the Workers' Compensation Board like every other support program. People should have access to it as long as they need it. They should be allowed to heal, but once they are healed they must be encouraged to go back to work.

But there's no question that, just like every other government program, some people become over-dependent on this one and there must be enough checks in place to ensure that they're not abusing the system. But there also, at the same time, has to be the recognition that the Workers' Compensation Board has outstanding, numerous files that need to be addressed.

Employers must also be treated fairly. Never again should we see the massive increases in premiums like the ones we saw a few years ago. The board has gone some way in bringing about more sensible rate codes, but they have been for the benefit . . . that have been for the benefit of many, but not all employers find themselves in a favourable position.

Many are worried that the continued expansion of what they see as Workers' Comp covers . . . what it covers will continue to cause premiums to jump in the future. So-called grey areas such as stress is now being covered. I say I would think that it would

be quite difficult to prove that stress is necessarily caused in the workplace. This could prove to be very costly in the end if not handled very, very carefully. And we hope the government is paying attention to that issue that employers are bringing forward.

The government has to be very careful when dealing with the expanded definition of injury. We do not want to see the Workers' Compensation Board covering these things that are diseases of life and lifestyle but not caused in the workplace. One only has to look at injuries . . . or, pardon me, lifestyle diseases such as smoking and cancer that is often a part of a smoker's life and somehow or another are associating that with a disease of the workplace. I think there has to be significant study into that issue before we *carte blanche* start offering compensation in that area.

If we continue to move in this direction, we'll see the amount the board pays out rise dramatically. Employers will have to pay for that cost, and that's what causes the loss of jobs in the end. This will hurt employers and employees alike. So I hope that the minister responsible is paying a great deal of attention to life and lifestyle issues and how they impact or do not impact upon workplace injuries.

There are also a number of concerns from people across this province about the Workers' Compensation Board that we're bringing forward and bringing our attention to in committee. We need many, many specific questions answered on this Bill before we are prepared to let it go forward.

We'll be asking those questions in the Committee of the Whole, and at this point we'll allow the Bill to proceed to that committee where we'll be asking those appropriate questions.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 38 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1998

Clause 1

The Acting Chair (Mr. Johnson): — Will the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. It's with great pleasure that I introduce the officials who are kind enough to come and assist the Assembly in its work this afternoon.

Seated to my right is Sherry Wolf, the very able assistant vice-president of licensing and registration services. To my left is Tim Shoulak, manager of Highway Traffic Board secretariat. And directly behind is Elizabeth Flynn, the legal assistant at SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) legal. I welcome these officials today to help us with the Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of questions, because I think this Bill is fairly non-controversial. Some minor, non-controversial revisions are being made to the rules of the road. One, I believe, a clause enabling drivers to

cross a solid line between lanes when utilizing the two-way, left-turn lane. And another section prohibiting a driver from driving in a two-way, left-turn lane unless he or she intends to turn left.

Mr. Minister, maybe you could just give us a little bit of clarification as to what the intent of those are. I think I understand them to a degree, but maybe just for our own knowledge, just to fill us in exactly what you mean by those two changes. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The member has correctly described the effect of the Bills. I am told by the officials that — I think this is what the member wants — the problem intended to be resolved is the danger of rear-end collisions, and therefore the ability to cross the solid white line has been set up in legislation. I'm not sure if I've answered the member's question or not.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, maybe I could refer to . . . you may be familiar, if I'm thinking right, just on South Albert, and I'm not exactly . . . just by the Safeway and the Golden Mile, there's a left-turn lane there. There is a solid line for probably half the block before the solid line moves and you can . . . I guess I've wondered about that myself. You know, you may have traffic already lined up past the solid line, but you have the left lane available for the left-turn arrow. Is that an area where you would say that it would be appropriate to cross and move into that left-turning lane?

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Now I am told that that is not an example of what it's aimed at. Rather the member can contemplate the centre-turn lanes which are in the north by the auto dealers up there. The sign indicates a two-way left-turning lane and this legislation enables people to cross into the lane so they can get into the turning lane to turn.

I think what I'm going to do is to table, and I'll provide the member opposite with a copy of, a diagram of such a turning lane and an explanation of how it works. That may make more sense than trying to describe it without the benefit of a diagram.

So if I could have the benefit of a page, I would ask you to table one copy and give one to the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in regards to the particular example I was thinking of . . . and I know where you are referring to as well. North Broad — been up there with all the car dealerships. There is a centre median that you can pull into and make left/rights out of, without basically . . . like you say, they are turning lanes so you are not hindering the traffic flow behind you. You're off ready to make your turn and that the other lanes can continue to proceed.

However in the situation that I've raised, if a person should cross . . . you're going to be making the left turn. There is a left-turn lane but there is a solid line up to a certain point. If you pulled over, are you saying that that would be basically contravening the Act, if you pulled in ahead of time in order to be in the left-turn lane at that particular intersection, if indeed

the through traffic lane is already full but there is opportunity to move in there? Is there any provisions here that would acknowledge that? Or would that be contravening the traffic Act to move . . . pull over on that solid line?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Johnson): — Yes, what is it?

Mr. Bjornerud: — By leave, Mr. Chairman, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and to the members today, Mr. Chairman, a group of 26 grade 12 students from Langenburg and their chaperons. I'd like to welcome them here today and I hope they enjoy the proceedings. It's too bad you missed question period because that's usually where most of the action is. But anyway, I would ask everyone to welcome them here today and I hope you enjoy your visit with us.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 38 (continued)

Clause 1

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I thank the member very much for the question, and it is indeed a good question. The answer is that you would be contravening the law in that case.

Second question, not yet asked, but which I know is coming is, what am I supposed to do when the traffic's sort of backed up so you can't manage a proper turn without crossing the line? This a process, I guess, by which normally the members are assisted by the public service. I think the public service here today have a problem which has, I think, not been raised with them quite in this fashion before.

So I think what we're going to want to do, I say to the member from Moosomin, is take the problem you raise under consideration and it may result in some changes in the future. The officials admit that they do not have a ready solution to the problem which you raised.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I raise that is because — especially when you get high flow traffic, 5 o'clock traffic or early in the morning — the one particular example basically is one that could almost be treated in much the same manner. Because if it was left open as a turning lane, especially when you have . . . your turning arrow happens to precede the flow-through green arrow and access, if you wait till you were past the solid line, you would miss the green arrow because the . . . you'd be held . . . and basically you're then hindering traffic.

So it might be something that may be looked at in the future and maybe an intersection like that, where you might allow basically the turning, the turning . . . What do you call this? —

the centre lane, in an area like that.

So I thank you for the response.

There's another one regarding a provision regarding arrows where you have an arrow when facing a red light and you're now allowed to proceed without stopping. Technically this is illegal under the current Act.

If I understand the Act, Mr. Minister, if you've got a green arrow I believe, you come to an intersection, even with the red and the green arrow, you still must give way to any traffic proceeding if they're proceeding through on the green. I'm not exactly sure what I would . . . I would treat that almost as an amber, that you proceed with caution. Is that not true?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Let me make the following comments. The existing section 65(5) allows a right turn on a red light or a red light with a green arrow, after stopping. The existing section 65(8) allows turns on green arrows with a red light, as allowed by the arrows after yielding the right of way . . . (inaudible) . . . from stopping. So section 65(5) requires a stop before making a right turn on a red light with a green arrow, and subsection 65(8) does not require the stop. The amended subsection 65 removes the reference to turning right on a red light with a green arrow; it still allows a right turn on a simple red light.

Mr. Toth: — Okay, if I understand you correctly then, it's basically allowing you just to proceed through. I think you said in section 65, it says you must stop and then proceed. And then I forget, 68 talked about just proceeding. Are you basically saying if you come up to an intersection with a red arrow . . . with a red light, a green turning arrow to the right, or even just with the red light — the knowledge that I believe on most red lights now — you can make the red . . . you can make the right-hand turn?

Are you basically saying, Mr. Minister, that if you proceed, the intersection is free, you can make the turn immediately without stopping or are you . . . Because it would seem to me that it would still be appropriate to stop to make sure that the intersection was cleared before you proceeded to make that right, whether you've got the green arrow or not.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Motorists are required to observe due caution and yield the right of way and check carefully, but in that instance there's no need to actually stop, come to a dead stop.

Mr. Toth: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Another requirement states that the permission of the Highway Traffic Board is needed in order to carry persons in public service vehicles, such as delivery trucks or semis. And it says that that's removed that. Can you explain the reasons for that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This amendment is made, I am informed, as a result of a recommendation from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, Mr. Chairperson. As a result of a generally buoyant economy, expanding demand for trucking services, the industry has a problem which I guess we welcome if they don't, and that is to having difficulty to finding drivers. And trying to make the occupation more family

friendly by allowing family members to travel in the truck with the trucker. And they have recommended to us that we delete this and leave the matter as a matter of company policy. And the companies, most of which are . . . all of which, I guess I should say, are reliable and hopefully would have licences. It's a matter of company policy now. But it's really intended to facilitate truckers taking their families along, which I guess is by far and away the most common usage of passengers in the truck.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It would seem to me that that would bound to be appropriate. I think we've had certainly some neighbours who were truckers, and of course in one case the wife also got a class A licence so she could drive and they could travel together.

But I didn't realize personally that you couldn't transport . . . or couldn't have someone in the vehicle. And you're right; most companies with long hauls, with the new regulations, do send two drivers that do have . . . well you're talking drivers. On the other hand, even just having somebody along, whether it's a family member, is certainly a way of keeping alert as well if you've got another person.

So I think that's appropriate, because I think that's just some common sense on the road and it just takes some of what could be a long, dull drive, and maybe make sure that the driver stays alert with the number of trucks we certainly have moving on our highways.

And I believe there is also one clause allowing the person to apply for the release of a vehicle impounded because it was driven by an unauthorized driver, and to appeal the hearing officer's decision to the Highway Traffic Board.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you just could give a brief explanation as to that clause and what it really specifically means.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — If your vehicle is impounded in these circumstances, the legislation clearly provides an appeal over the telephone to officers. It was the intention of the administrators of this legislation that there would be a further appeal to Highway Traffic Board itself. These circumstances can be fairly punitive.

The legislation however, I'm informed, was not clear about this right of appeal and so this amendment in effect, effects what the, what the administration intended. And that is that in the circumstances, there's a further appeal to the Highway Traffic Board. So it's just providing an appeal which they always intended to provide.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, wouldn't it just be common sense if your vehicle is . . . if somebody's borrowing your vehicle or using your vehicle and if for some reason as a result of an offence they've committed . . . that you wouldn't have to go through a lot of red tape to have your vehicle delivered back to you or released from being impounded?

It would seem to me that you're putting a lot of onus upon . . . and I appreciate the fact that I think as owners of vehicles we

need to be mindful of who we may allow the vehicle to be driven by. But at the same time, due to circumstance that we don't have any control, I think that there should be some consideration and I would hope that Highway Traffic Board is mindful of this.

And I think at times, sometimes individual officers may become fairly, fairly firm and just say this is the letter rather than recognizing the circumstances and the fact that in some cases it may be a family's only method of . . . means of transportation — they've got the one vehicle. And unfortunately I had one of those circumstances come up and it makes it very difficult for a family who thought they were doing something good for an individual to ask the use of a vehicle.

So I hope this simplifies the process as you're talking about it and makes provisions to allow for, I guess a more meaningful and easier access unless there's real strong reasons to impound or to maintain or to hold the vehicle. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you. It certainly enhances the rights of the individuals to get their vehicle back and it provides a further level of appeal.

Mr. Chairperson, I would . . . I think I should actually formally ask for leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I have been informed that behind the bar is Gordon MacMurchy. Gordon MacMurchy is a former hockey player of note, if one goes back far enough. I believe the Maple Leafs was the team, and I'm going from memory from a long time. Was a minister in the Blakeney government, a distinguished minister of Agriculture; was I think, the minister of Education when the current collective bargaining process was brought in; was minister of Municipal Affairs.

I know all members will want to join me in welcoming a . . . And he's been mayor of Semans for some time. I know all members will want to join with me in recognizing a distinguished Saskatchewan citizen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 38 (continued)

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to just extend a thanks to the minister and his officials for their response to the questions this afternoon. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you. I'd like to first of all thank the opposition for what I thought were some very good

questions, one of which we will be reviewing I think, and perhaps bringing back an amendment.

I also want to thank the officials for their assistance. And that having been said, I move the Bill be reported without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 39 — The Vehicle Administration
Amendment Act, 1998**

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. The officials . . . Pardon me, Mr. Chairperson. The officials are the same and we stand ready to answer any questions that the opposition members may have.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials. We have a few questions on Bill No. 39 for clarification I think, more so than for actual direction of policy.

Well this Bill suggests, I think in section no., new section no. 14, clause 3, suggests that it will allow the Government of Saskatchewan to enter into agreements with other countries. Mr. Minister, do you expect a number of agreements, and when do you expect these kinds of agreements to occur with different countries?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. We now have agreements in place with many of the jurisdictions in the U.S. (United States), that being the States. I am informed by the officials that we anticipate agreements with members of the European Economic Community in the relatively near future.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, have other provinces entered into agreements with the jurisdictions in the States as well as the European countries that you've suggested?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, in section (2) of clause 3 it suggests that the minister or the administrator shall obtain the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council for expenditures greater than \$50,000. Can you indicate what you expect would be the kinds of agreements that would be entered into? And because there is no maximum amount here, are there limits placed on what kinds of agreements the minister can enter into?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This is a standard provision which we put in all legislation, and has been put in all legislation for quite some time actually. The amount used to be lower. I think when we took office I remember the amount being \$10,000, and that's since been increased. But this is a . . . there's a standard provision which is put in all legislation.

I'm told they don't have anything unusual in mind for this. This is just the provisions of The Financial Administration Act at work so that the Department of Finance is able to exercise its

usual control over the finances of the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — From your knowledge, Mr. Minister, would you be able to give any examples, historically speaking, of the kinds of situations where we've entered into a financial liability of greater than \$50,000?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Not in this administration. No, not in this administration — any number of examples in other departments, but I'm told that not in this subvote.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in clause no. 4 it indicates that besides the vision report that has been required by licensing agents like SGI previously, you've now added the terms, addictions counsellor or psychologist.

Two questions there, Mr. Minister. The concern that has been expressed before when it was just the requirement for a vision report was who was going to pay for that, and I think we have had that discussion previously in this House. Has that problem been corrected regarding the vision tests? And now that you've added or this Bill proposes to add that an addictions counsellor as well as a psychologist report may have to be obtained, I'm sure that there may be costs involved. Who will be picking up those costs?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The intention is that SGI will pay for them. Just a cautionary note from the officials here — they tell me that in order to effect that under this regulation, there will need to be amendments to regulations and those will follow in due course, I assume probably before the Act is proclaimed.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, were the regulations changed to allow for SGI to pick up the costs for vision reports as they now are?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes. Those regulations will have to be put in place in order for SGI to be authorized to make the payments.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, then when do you see the regulations being adjusted and when can people who have been asked for vision reports and have incurred expenses, when will that pass through to . . . the cost be passed on to SGI?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The officials are reluctant to give us a date. There are apparently some financial implications. I'm not sure of the exact amount. The officials do not have a firm date by which . . . They do not have a firm target date for putting this into effect. So not a very satisfactory answer but that's the answer, such as it is.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know that we had expressed that concern a year ago and there was I think, a concern as well as a commitment on behalf of . . . by the minister to look at those changes at least a year ago. And I would encourage the minister to see whether things can proceed in this calendar year.

Final couple of points, Mr. Minister. This Act now brings into place, I guess what could be referred to as reciprocal agreements between Saskatchewan as a province, and states of United States, whereby driving infractions where there are

convictions or cancellations I guess, or suspensions that would occur in the United States, would now apply to Saskatchewan.

I guess two questions. One, what were we relying on before when we had someone from the United States I guess come to Saskatchewan with a previous American driver's licence, and that being suspended, how did we deal with that before?

And then the second question, now that this will be in place, will the reciprocity work the opposite way in that someone who currently is in Saskatchewan with a Saskatchewan driver's licence, incurs a suspension or cancellation and then moves to the United States, will that also follow them in that type of a reciprocity agreement?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The answer to your question is yes. The intention is that there will be mutual recognition — ours of their convictions and they of ours. It goes without saying of course that we will . . . in order for ours to be recognized there, there would have to be legislative changes there with all the complications it ensues. But the intention of the agreement which has been entered into between the jurisdictions, is that there shall be mutual recognition — ours of theirs and theirs of ours.

Mr. Krawetz: — The first half of my question, Mr. Minister. How did we deal with this before? Did we not have some sort of reciprocity or did we not know about suspensions and cancellations of people coming from other provinces, other states, and applying for a Saskatchewan driver's licence? How did we deal with this up to this point?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I know I'm informed that heretofore there has been no system for recognizing convictions for in the U.S. I think it would be contrary to what most people would have expected and believed. But that I'm sure it is the case.

Mr. Krawetz: — In that case, Mr. Minister, I'm glad to see that that section is changing. Because I think that's very clear, as a former owner of an insurance brokerage, it's very difficult to determine whether or not someone has convictions and suspensions when they're coming from another country or from another province.

And I'm glad to see we're making those changes. And I want to thank you and your officials for your comments today.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been just waiting in great anticipation to ask this minister a few questions. I wasn't aware that it would be on The Vehicle Administration Act, Mr. Chair, but I'm very pleased it is.

Just a couple of questions of clarification. I'm hoping that this falls within a similar purview.

My first question is, do you have a process, or a check and balance in place for mandatory testing? And I apologize if this is not the appropriate forum to ask this particular question. But in dealing with driver's licences and suspensions and offences, is there a program in place where mandatory testing suddenly appears on a screen or when a licence comes up for a renewal, because of certain criteria. I guess I'm curious about whether or not there are criteria in place to enact or initiate mandatory

testing.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I am informed, Mr. Chairperson, that there is no mandatory testing except where you enter into a new class of licence. Otherwise there's no mandatory testing except school bus drivers who are tested every three years. Apart from that exception, there is no mandatory testing; except of course when you enter into a new class of licence, there of course there is mandatory testing.

There remains discretionary testing in the discretion of the officials of Highway Traffic Board, generally on medical grounds, where medical reasons are brought to the attention of the Highway Traffic Board.

(1530)

Mr. Osika: — Those medical attentions would have to be brought to the attention of the Traffic Board by whom? — an individual? a family member? I guess the reason that I'm asking the question — I'm getting on in years and I'm just wondering if one day I'll get a letter saying, hey listen, at this point in time we're going to bring you in and check you out because you haven't been checked out for 30 years or 20 years. Perhaps it might be time that, as the Justice minister suggests, I may need a little testing along the way here.

So I just wondered if there was an expansion of that criteria for mandatory testing at some point for perhaps the assurance of safety for individuals themselves?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, there is no testing at a certain age, which I think is what the member is alluding to. That would be contrary to the, I would venture to say, that would be contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But there is discretionary testing when medical information comes to the attention of the Highway Traffic Board. It may come from anywhere. It may come from, the member mentioned, family members. It may come from occasionally . . . medical doctors will be concerned about a patient and exercise that concern by passing on information. It sometimes comes from observations made by members of the RCMP or police force.

It may come from anywhere. But there is no testing on the basis of age.

Mr. Osika: — And no random testing?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — And no random testing, no.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I didn't put your officials through a great deal of anxiety so I . . . But thank you.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, the member didn't. I thank the member opposite, members opposite, for their questions, and again I want to thank the officials for the assistance they've provided on this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 15 — The Gas Inspection
Amendment Act, 1998**

The Acting Chair (Mr. Johnson): — I would ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I am sure the members will want to join with me in welcoming Gordon Williams, who is the province's chief gas inspector.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your official.

A few points of clarification, I guess, first of all. The intention behind a Bill like this, I mean I think I hear you in your explanations refer to gas installation, gas maintenance, and the like. What's the overall purpose of this amendment?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Let me answer the member very generally by saying the purpose of the amendment is to enhance safety with respect to the use of natural gas. It encourages routine maintenance of gas equipment by removing the word "maintenance" from the definition of gas installation; clarifies that an operator of a distribution system is responsible for ensuring that gas piping, as distinct from gas equipment, is free from defects; clarifies that a gas inspector has authority to deal with all hazards of all types relating to gas equipment or any gas installation, as well as potential dangers not only to persons, but to property. So generally it's intended to enhance safety.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you for that explanation, Mr. Minister; and that's something that we encourage as well.

Currently in the province of Saskatchewan, what is the total number of gas inspectors that we would have available for call on a gas inspection request.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are 21 inspectors in the province.

Mr. Krawetz: — What is the current waiting-list, in terms of time, from the time that someone would submit for a gas inspection to the time that an inspector will actually do that, and does that vary from large urban centres like our 12 cities to rural areas and northern areas?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I am assured by Mr. Williams that if a safety concern is phoned in or brought to their attention, that's dealt with very promptly right away. The routine inspections of installations, they attempt to do it within six months; currently running a little behind that but that's the time frames within which they work.

Mr. Krawetz: — With the clarification for installation and maintenance, obviously you want maintenance to occur on an annual basis, and that probably will. Do you expect that the number of requests for gas inspection will decrease because of

the fact that maintenance is now taken out of that? Did it cause a problem before and will you expect there to be a shortening, I guess, of that six-month waiting period if indeed there are fewer requests that a gas inspector has to actually attend to?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, I'm told that the provision with respect to maintenance didn't really have any impact on the frequency of the time it took to make the inspections. It is hoped there'll be fewer disputes between the contractors and the homeowners, but it won't have any effect, beneficial or deleterious, on the length of time it takes to have an inspection done.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, could you clarify then, an inspection, is it only needed when there is actually, I guess, a breaking of a pipe, because of a new installation, of changes to piping, and therefore then regular maintenance changes to equipment or to other things that will occur do not require that type of inspection now?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, I'm assured by the officials that they don't normally go out looking for maintenance issues. They inspect installations which are brought to their attention through the purchase of permits or they inspect matters where there's a complaint or concern phoned in to them. But they don't normally go around looking for maintenance . . . places to inspect.

Mr. Krawetz: — What are the costs to a consumer to have a gas inspection done? Does it vary with the type of inspection? Does it vary with the areas of the province?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The vast majority of inspections are done at the . . . when contractors are installing equipment, and it varies depending on what's being done. For a new home, the inspection would be \$110. It might be as little as \$40 if it were for a water heater. But it varies on the type of installation.

Where there's a safety concern — that means somebody phones in or complains — there's no fee charged. They go and make the inspection and whatever the result, there's no fee charged.

It is possible for someone to phone in and say, I'd like an inspection done, I'm concerned about it, or whatever. In that case they . . . there is a fee charged for someone who asks for an inspection. It can . . . it starts at \$35, might go up to \$70, depending again on the nature of the inspection.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you've indicated that the actual equipment will now become the responsibility of the installer I think, not the people who are laying the pipe or placing the pipe. Have you had consultations with the mechanical companies and the plumbing companies of the province to see whether or not they will be affected and whether or not they support the changes that you have proposed?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The contractors have asked for this for some time actually. I know from having served in the government over the years that contractors have asked for this for a number of years. It is not so much that they want the additional work and business, although there may be something to that, they simply see this as part of their responsibility; they

waiting for this to start; so I would want to thank Mr. Williams for assisting us here and for waiting patiently. That having been said, Mr. Chairperson, I move the committee rise to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 38 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 39 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1998

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

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

Bill No. 15 — The Gas Inspection Amendment Act, 1998

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Legislation — Vote 21 Conflict of Interest Commissioner

The Acting Chair (Mr. Whitmore): — I would like the minister to introduce his officials here today.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'm pleased to have with me today, Darcy McGovern from the Department of Justice.

Subvote (LG09)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. And welcome, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

This afternoon we're talking about the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and I'm sure it's one of the departments or one of the areas of government that most people don't think about very often. And I'm just wondering if you can give me an idea of . . . summarize the activities of the department that's . . . that has taken place over the last year.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would remind the member that this office is an office related to the legislature and reports to the legislature, and practically, the report that's filed by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner sets out what he's done.

And I think practically, he says the activities of the office

during the last year included: receiving private disclosure statements from the members and preparing and filing these appropriate public disclosure statements; providing opinions from time to time to members in accordance with section 27(1) of the Act, and they're given both formally in writing and informally; and then also providing opinions pursuant to section 29(1) of the Act, although this last year there was no request that was public . . . (inaudible) . . . But this is all in the report that's been filed with the legislature.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure you would have mentioned it, but I'm just wondering if there's been any major legislative or regulatory changes to this commission over the past year.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There were no major changes to any of the regulations or the Act, but there were some administrative changes around the format of the disclosure statement used by members.

Ms. Draude: — And have you encountered any difficulty in securing conflict of interest reports of members of this Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's not a question that I can answer because it would be more properly asked of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner himself, as he then in turn reports to the Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Are you aware of any changes to legislation that would improve public confidence in the members of this Assembly?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm not sure exactly what the question intended, but there are no changes that have been suggested that I know of at this point that would accomplish what the member's talking about.

I think that in this particular area there are some discussions — I guess you could put it that way — around the extent of conflict. And we've looked at some of those things over the years, but this particular year there haven't been any specific suggestions.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me how many staff there is in your office?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's only one person and that's the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. But he then rents space from the law firm where he's located which includes secretarial help.

Ms. Draude: — Do you contract out any work?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Ms. Draude: — Has there been any need to seek any legal or auditing opinions from the outside over the last year?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The Conflict of Interest Commissioner does have the power to do that, but we're not aware that he did that at all in the last year and it doesn't show up in his report.

Ms. Draude: — The operating budget has stayed stable for the past several years at around \$31,000. However, your salaries have shown a relatively large variation. Two years ago, you were paying \$75,000 in salaries and this year about \$50,000, and next year there's a budget for about \$60,000.

Can you give us an idea of why there's this change in salaries? Why there's a shift in the salaries?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If you'll recall from last year when we talked about the estimates, we were advised by the commissioner that the \$75,000 budgeted for the previous year was more than he needed. And so we dropped it down to 50,000. But this year the Board of Internal Economy, through a directive no. 20 adopted on January 6, 1994, set the salary of the commissioner at an amount equal to one-half of the salary of the Ombudsman, appointed pursuant to The Ombudsman's Act.

And the Ombudsman's salary is tied directly to the salary of a Provincial Court judge. So therefore when we resolved the Provincial Court judges' lawsuits, then the amount went up by the 10,000 that you see here.

So it's directly related to the directive of the Board of Internal Economy.

Ms. Draude: — If they need more or less money, I would imagine it can be done without going back to the Board of Internal Economy. Or is it something that they would have to have a specific request so that they could do more work if that was required?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Is your question related to salary or to the budget?

Ms. Draude: — . . . higher than the \$60,000. Are they going to have to go back again to ask for it, or is that just something that will automatically happen?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the nature of this particular job, if there was a major issue that arose that involved quite a bit of accounting or lawyers or other fees and work by the commissioner, then that would be dealt with through the normal budgeting process to deal with the special circumstance.

So I don't think there would ever be a situation where the commissioner would run out of money to do a job that needed to be done.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, in a Crown corporations review it's been discussed that some of the members of the committee might be in conflict with the Channel Lake inquiry board because they sat on the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) board. Would your office have the authority or the expertise to make rulings on questions of this nature?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the question was asked of me, but you're basically asking the question whether the commissioner could do that. And if you look at the Act, there is the possibility of raising this issue under the terms of the Act because the commissioner is an officer of the legislature and basically he's

bound by the rules that are set out in the Act. So presumably, it would be possible to raise it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate your attendance, I appreciate your official being here, and I don't have any further questions.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you.

Subvote (LG09) agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislation — Vote 21
Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner**

Subvote (LG08)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. And thank you again, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, can you give us an idea of how many freedom of information requests the office receives in a year?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Once again I would advise the member that the Information and Privacy Commissioner is an officer of the legislature and he reports to the legislature through the Speaker. But based on the annual report that has been filed, the commissioner points out that he received 30 requests for review and he issued 13 reports following the review.

Ms. Draude: — So there was only 43 FOIs (freedom of information) received last year from the department?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If the question you asked is how many received across government, that is set out in his report and the number would be 458. The number that I gave you was the number of those requests that were then appealed to the Commissioner and he then reviewed 30. So there were 30 appeals sent to him. After those appeals he ended up doing 13 reports. But the total number was 458.

Ms. Draude: — That makes sense. I was beginning to think that maybe we were the only ones that would send in FOIs because I'm sure our offices sent in more than that. I'm wondering if you can give us an idea who the most frequent clients of the office are. Is it the opposition, or is it the taxpayers' associations, or media, or just the general public?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The statistics in the report are set out based on the departments that receive them rather than based on who actually files the request. And basically the reason for that is that if we reported who was filing the requests that would be a breach of their privacy.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And then can you give us an idea of what the hot spots are, which areas of government gets the most requests for FOIs under legislation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Based on the report with the legislature, the top area is Health at 50, second is Liquor and Gaming with 41, and then third is the Human Rights Commission with 40. Then it goes down from there to zero.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, does this office have a promotional budget? By that, I'm just wondering if there's any effort made to ensure that the public knows that the office exists

and that they have this service available to them to protect those dollars?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The commissioner does have some money available for an education role and he fulfils that role in a couple of different ways. The first most obvious one is by answering calls when people do call his office. He also has a pamphlet that is distributed, and I think he's also available if people want to ask him to come and talk about his job and what he does.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. But in order for any of those scenarios to work the people are going to have to know about him in the first place before they can phone in or before he can go speak to them. I'm wondering if there is any way that the general public is let know. Are schools let know? Is there ever something put in the paper advising people that there is somebody out there that can answer questions for them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that the simple answer to your question is that the number is available various places — information lines, things like that.

Also we know from the public discussion around concern relating to privacy and freedom of information that there is general knowledge throughout the province that if anybody has a particular problem in this area that a person can contact that official. And it's also, I suppose, part of our national system that every province has an official that deals with these kinds of issues.

But there isn't specifically a campaign that goes out and explains the job and the role to the public, but I think it's part of a whole array of government services that are available.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do think that it probably wouldn't be expensive and it wouldn't hurt for the young people in our province to be made aware through the school system that this department is there. And if they have questions that they should write in or phone in or whatever it would take to answer some things that inquisitive minds may be coming up with.

Under FOI legislation, departments are required to respond to requests within 30 days. What role do you play in enforcing this time limit?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Okay. I'll go from the report here. But as I said before there are 458 requests which is comprised of 121 personal requests and 337 general requests — they're broken down that way.

The processing time for applications throughout government is such that of the total of 458, 313 were processed within 30 days. And then another 35 were . . . 413, I should say, 413 were within 30 days. Another 35 were within 60 days. And there were only 10 that took more than 60 days.

Ms. Draude: — That seems like an incredible rate, then. I congratulate you. It seems like this is something that all departments should be working this well. Maybe we could even tell the federal government about that. It takes considerably

longer for them.

Can you tell me how many FOI requests were rejected last year and how many of those were appealed?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Those were the numbers that I gave you earlier. There were 30 appeals.

Ms. Draude: — Of the ones that were appealed, were any of them overturned by your office?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The request is about the commissioner's office as opposed to my office. But practically in the report, he upheld the refusal to disclose the records in one instance out of the 30 requests. There were two cases where he decided that he had no jurisdiction. And in the remainder of the requests he said that access should be provided.

Ms. Draude: — Again that sounds like good information for the general public.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what role you see yourself playing for and in expanding the mandate of this commission. For example, the Provincial Auditor has campaigned for years in the media for the Crowns to be included in his jurisdiction. And is there any effort being made to expand that information that is available to the public?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'm not sure of the intent of your question, but practically in Saskatchewan all of the Crown corporations are included in this Act already. And so that the report I gave you, including the 450 . . . what was that, 458 applications, that did include applications to SaskPower, SaskEnergy, Sask Government Insurance, Sask Crop Insurance — I mean all of those corporations are included in this report.

Ms. Draude: — Good news to the minister. Some of the Crown corporation committees, like SaskPower Commercial, doesn't fall under the jurisdiction of your office. Can you explain why it doesn't? And is this exemption really appropriate, and can we correct it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well we know that SaskPower Corporation is included, and presumably the corporation that you're asking about is a subsidiary of SaskPower . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. And if it's not included, well then we would be willing to look at that and see that it would be reviewed to see whether it should be included in the rest. But practically the legislation is quite broad and includes the corporations, Crown corporations of the government.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, you're just a bearer of great tidings today. You're telling us that some, whether we can get SaskPower Commercial included under FOI or conflict of interest by . . . Do we appeal or do we write a letter, or how would we make sure that we could get the information from the commercial division?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think practically you'd have to recognize as well that this is going to be considered. And one of the considerations, obviously if it's a commercial operation, there would be some restrictions on what information we could get from them, but practically we'll, you know, we'll take a look at

that based on these discussions.

In a similar way, your previous comments about education through this office; oh I know that the commissioner will be reading these debates and I'm sure he'll take that information and use it as a way of looking at whether . . . other ways he can enhance the office.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, you'll recall that last year there was public discussion about the release of cabinet documents and now I'd just like some clarification. Previously cabinet documents were kept secret for 25 years but last year's legislation protected them for . . . is it a further 25 years? So they would actually be protected for 50 years. Or could you explain that please?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the question that you're asking is about the changes that were made to the provincial archives Act as opposed to this particular legislation.

Ms. Draude: — That would be the one.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And so that those questions don't relate to this particular commissioner.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, it's our understanding that other jurisdictions in Canada release cabinet documents after 10 years. I'm just wondering why our legislation is out of step and if there's any reason why our cabinet documents are more secretive than in other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think today we're dealing with the Privacy Commissioner and the Freedom of Information Commissioner, and the questions you're asking relate to The Archives Act and the arrangements that are made between the provincial archives and individuals surrounding paper, papers that may have been deposited there. And so that's not an area for this particular discussion.

Ms. Draude: — So anything to do with these cabinet documents is something that we'd have to be bringing up to who then?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, the provincial archives Act are under the Minister of Municipal Government. But some of the, you know, opinions that you've registered here, well I certainly report them to my colleagues, that you have some concerns in this area.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, because the remaining questions that I do have are involving The Archives Act and I guess then we will bring them up when the appropriate minister comes. So again I thank you and I thank your official.

Subvote (LG08) agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
Vote 37**

The Acting Chair (Mr. Whitmore): — I would ask the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is Dan Perrins, deputy minister; Ken Alecxe, associate deputy minister; Lily Stonehouse, assistant deputy minister; May Boa, executive director of finance and operations; John Biss, oh he's way back there, executive director, university services; and Brady Salloom is there as well, director of student financial assistance; and Jim Benning, the CEO (chief executive officer) of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation).

Subvote (PE01)

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And, Madam Minister, welcome to you and your officials. I know that they have been waiting patiently, that we're late in the day today. And I'm not sure exactly how much information we'll be able to get through today. But I know your department of course is responsible for a lot of areas from student loans, and assisting to university funding, to regional colleges, to job training and skills, and those are a lot of different areas that we'll have I think a number of questions for you.

I would ask if you have had the opportunity to compile a response to a global request regarding employees and direction that your department has undertaken the kinds of things that have been put forward to all departments as I understand from the opposition.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. We've just received that in our office today and we'll get right on it, but we've just received it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'll look forward to that response. I want to begin with one question in the area of student loans and leave that area for a future date. And of course the first question is one that has been brought to our attention by many, many individuals. Many people have called.

As a result of the announcement of the federal government regarding interest on student loans, existing students loans, and of course the announcement in the budget of your government that indicated that the provincial student loan interest, that there would be a deduction, the question that we're receiving most often now by way of telephone call or letter is will banks, will financial institutions, be contacting individuals who currently have a student loan and explain to them the procedures that they will have to follow over the course of 1999 and onwards regarding claiming the interest as both the federal deduction and a provincial deduction? How can they do that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. It's the bank that explains it to the students. I think the logic here is because they're so familiar with helping people with financial information, understanding different kinds of accounts, loan obligations, etc., they're really in a better position to give much broader advice to students on financial matters.

(1630)

Mr. Krawetz: — Will the first year that will be affected, will that be 1998? And will financial institutions be required to submit T5's or T6's or whatever is necessary to indicate to the

individual the amount of interest paid over the year, and what their credit will be both federally and provincially?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They're going to be doing in the form of a letter to the students indicating what interest they paid in the current year. And it's this year that we're in now, so it would be reflected in the next tax year.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good. Thank you very much, Madam Minister. I know that that's an answer I think that a lot of people have been looking for in terms of what kind of procedures they have to follow. Whether it'll be their obligation to ensure that they receive the credit, or indeed whether or not the banking institution will be actually approaching those people who have loans. And you've clarified that.

As I said, I'd like to return to the area of student loans on another day and begin today, I guess, by addressing the area of JobStart-Future Skills employment programs — tremendous change to your department I think, Madam Minister. If I look at your FTE (full-time equivalent) in terms of the staff complement that you're expecting within your department, I see a significant increase.

Could you explain how the changes federally that have come about, and the changes that you now see your department having to go through regarding the future start and job skills training program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's been substantial increases in what the program does but the increase in person-years hasn't been related to that. It's been related to the transfer of responsibilities and staff from the federal government through the Labour Market Agreement and also the employees of the New Careers Crown Corporation into there. So that would be where those staff have come from. They aren't new staff, they're just relocated.

Mr. Krawetz: — Could you explain how the federal changes have affected your direction, your objectives within your department, and the kinds of things that you are now responsible for that were outside of your area before?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I think there's two ways federal changes have affected us. You may remember, I think it was a couple of years ago now, that they changed the Employment Insurance Act. And one of the things they did when they changed that Act is they moved from funding spaces in institutions to funding individuals. So institutions no longer have a guarantee of funds to operate the institutions, and they have to depend on whether or not people subscribe to their institution in order to know whether they've got funding for the year.

And this has resulted in some pretty dramatic losses in funds. I think SIAST lost something like 9 million in funds through seat purchase that used to be there before. And the seat purchase also that the federal government used to do used to ensure that categories of persons coming out of the EI (Employment Insurance) system would have guaranteed seats set aside for them, and that doesn't exist any more as well, as a matter of the EI legislation.

Now the other change that's taking place is with the labour

market human resource services. And instead of having sort of three different offices — one for people on assistance, one for the general population, and one for people on EI — that will now be collapsed all into one single window service, with hopefully much better use of staff time and some ability to use some of that surplus time for more individual counselling and career support and advice.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The program that you've just described, and how the current institutions in Saskatchewan will deal with the changes that have been imposed upon Saskatchewan federally, do you see any changes to the programs as far as whether or not we can accommodate the needs of our students? Or has the financial pressure that has been placed upon SIAST — you've indicated a potential of \$9 million reduction in terms of funding from the federal government to those seat purchases — has that affected the overall delivery of an education program in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think the simplest way to answer that is that we've back-filled the money that was removed in that way, but we've also added some new programming in JobStart-Future Skills, and so the institutions, by accessing some of these new programs, can make up for some of the money that they lost. I think as well they're probably moving a little bit, not hugely, but a little bit into doing also some contract training and some other things from, employers that have training needs, from the institutions. So they're maybe having to be a little more entrepreneurial in that sense.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. A recent announcement, if I recall, through JobStart and Future Skills, indicated that programs like trucking, implement manufacturing, sound and recording, apparel and textile, and tourism had each received \$50,000 — I think was the amount that had been announced — in provincial grants.

That's a sum of some \$250,000 in total to those five particular industries. Were those the only industries that you looked at in terms of providing an assistance? And I guess the question then, if that was the only five, what about the other industries that are involved in, you know, great work in Saskatchewan. Will they be provided with any grants to allow them to expand and to research their areas?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's an industry-driven program and when they're ready, they approach us and discuss it with us. There's nine partnerships have been signed to date: apparel and textile; tourism; implement manufacturing; recording; film and video; and culture; fire safety; export manufacturing; and truck and transport are the nine signed to date.

Mr. Krawetz: — What will the grant monies that you've provided . . . what do you hope that the various nine industries, what do you hope that they will do with that additional money that you provided to them?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's largely to do their human resource planning; so that they can work with the training institutions and with individuals to make sure that they have that steady supply of skilled and trained workers that they need to keep their industry moving and not find out that all of a sudden they've hit a wall where they don't have the people they need.

And it can be very devastating, particularly to an export industry, if they don't have the people they need at the time when they've got the orders to fill.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, what is the total dollar figure that your department will deal with for the JobStart-Future Skills program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The JobStart-Future Skills is 13.2 million overall; and to date since its inception, there's 7,600 people who have been trained under that.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Under the same section, the employment and programs and services section, you've indicated . . . or the *Estimates* indicate that there is a line item for Labour Market Development Agreement programs of 22 million, whereas last year there was no expenditure in that line item.

You've said that there's been a reshuffling in terms of bringing around agencies. Could you explain where the various departments have come from and how that figure of 22 million . . . What kinds of needs will the 22 million address as far as the students in the . . . not only students I guess, but adults who are seeking training programs?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well the money is prorated; it's not a full-year money, it's based on the amount of time that we'll actually be responsible for the agreement this year. And I'm just going from memory; it's 70 employees . . . 114 altogether, pardon me. And when this is fully complete, I will have full-year funding and all the employees will be moved over.

Mr. Krawetz: — When you say moved over, that's the explanation that I'm looking for, Madam Minister. Where are they coming from, where were they located before, what are they doing, and how will that now reallocate into your department to meet the needs that you have?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think most people would be fairly familiar with the work the employment centres do — its placement, its career counselling. The one function we aren't taking over from them is the Employment Insurance cheques. We don't do that; we just provide the labour market and training services to people.

They currently have 17 locations in the province. So one of the things we'll be doing over the next year is trying to figure out how to bring the offices together — the Human Resource Development offices that were previously federal, with the regional college services, with the New Careers services. And we'll be looking to co-locate wherever that doesn't . . . it already exists in some places. And we'll be looking for what the community's view is of the best way to do that co-location and the best location for that region.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Another area in the estimates are in the area of New Careers, and you've mentioned that terminology today. What was the specific role, I guess . . . New Careers has been around for a long time, the corporation itself. What was the mission statement? What did New Careers attempt to accomplish and what were its objectives?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It was really employment readiness programs for social assistance recipients. What we've done, as we're transforming the program, is tie it more tightly to jobs. Because some of the activity they did was important in developing work skills and getting an attachment to the labour force.

But what we've tried to do in the newest transformations to the program is to have it more labour market attached, and more attached to real jobs.

We're wanting to, I guess, get as many people participating permanently in the labour force as we can through these expenditures.

Mr. Krawetz: — Your footnote, Madam Minister, indicates that New Careers Corporation will be disestablishing during 1998-99. Will this have any significance on the people who are receiving social assistance right now, as far as whether or not there will be another avenue for them to secure training?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think the best way to explain that is there is still the News Careers route. The only thing that's changing is the stronger attachment to the labour market. There's a basic education component, as now, that's required as well. And also it will be delivered more in conjunction with the programs that were previously federally delivered through the Labour Market Agreement, the HR (human resources) services that were delivered.

But also there's a provincial training allowance as well that may pick up some of those folks who, instead of going directly into a job setting, want to further their education as their main endeavour. And the provincial training allowance covers people up until they graduate from grade 12. It's the precursor to the student loan for post-secondary.

The main difference is that we're trying to work more with employers rather than managing the employment ourselves.

Mr. Krawetz: — Madam Minister, I'm aware of a number of communities who have taken advantage of New Careers Corporation and have had facilities constructed, have had renovations. School divisions have even used New Careers in the past. I'm not sure how long they've been in existence, but I'm sure it's a number of years.

I'm wondering whether or not that void now, the fact that New Careers disappears, are there communities now that won't be able to receive or won't be able to complete projects that, you know, they had relied on New Careers before? Because as I said, I know of a number of communities that have had projects completed and sponsored by New Careers, where New Careers was very heavily involved and actually completed the additions of buildings.

Now with the phasing out of New Careers Corporation, is there any replacement for that by way of another project?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll give you a two-part answer. One part is the workers — they can still get the workers; the difference is we will no longer have our own supervisors and

what not on site. The people who have the workers have to take responsibility for the supervision.

And the other difference is there was some equipment that was owned by New Careers Corporation, and it's our intention that that equipment continued to be used for the purposes it was purchased within communities. So people who have an established history of providing services similar to what New Careers was doing in the community, there's a process for them to apply to be considered to retain some of that equipment.

(1645)

Mr. Krawetz: — If I understand you correctly, Madam Minister, you're saying then that if a community group, a municipality, or an ad hoc committee at a community level, desires to renovate the senior citizens' club, they can now make applications through JobStart-Future Skills for people who were currently . . . or previously under New Careers; and that now they can access that employment of the same type of things.

I understand that mileage was one of the criteria or expenses that was incurred by projects before when New Careers was involved. Will those same type of financial arrangements, will they still exist under this new plan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, they'll just phone the same people they used to phone. We sort of have a package of employment programs and they'll pick the particular package that suits the circumstance that they have the best. And certainly they'll be expected, not just to keep people busy, but also for there to be an active learning component on the job.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm not sure whether this is a question that I should direct to your department or whether it's through SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), but I'm aware that a particular facility in the community of Kamsack was constructed for New Careers Corporation and that, indeed over the last I believe 10 years, there has been a rent paid on an empty building that's been sitting in Kamsack, by I believe . . . the expense would have been incurred by New Careers or was it just an expense incurred by SPMC?

And the second question, it's my understanding that the building has now been sold. Would it now be a liability that your department has removed from your liability list?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I hate to disappoint you, but I guess you are going to have to ask SPMC, because we were a tenant, but not the landlord, and we didn't pay the cost of the building itself.

Mr. Krawetz: — Over the last 10 years then New Careers Corporation was not assessed the costs of the rental of that building in Kamsack?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We're not aware of that at the moment, but we'll check it out and bring it back for you.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. And the other question I would like to know is whether or not New Careers Corporation has been involved with the actual selling of that building. If you could bring that information forward, I'd

appreciate that somewhere down the road.

When JobStart-Future Skills, your money that you've indicated that you provide to the various industries, are you providing it to the industry as a whole? Are you providing some funding to companies as well?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The planning money for doing sector-wide planning goes to industry, but the actual on-the-job training component goes to the particular industry . . . or the particular employer that's doing the training — the particular company.

Mr. Krawetz: — I'm not sure whether that request is in our globals, Madam Minister, but I'd appreciate if you could provide us with a listing of the employers or companies that receive grants. Would that be possible?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We can certainly do that. Yes.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, the post-secondary area of the university area has been looking I guess patiently at the MacKay report and the kinds of suggestions that it has made.

I guess the first question that I have for you this afternoon is: with the initiatives that were put forth in the MacKay report, what have you as minister seen occur regarding some of the suggestions that were suggested by the report and the kinds of things that might be happening in the near future? Could you give us a summary of some of the things that you see happening between the two universities in this province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is quite a big load. Do you want me to go through the whole thing? It's essentially . . . under MacKay, it was a process of identifying some of the things the universities needed to work on and then to set up some structures for them to work on those things together.

And there was three levels of committees set up — one actually at the Premier and the president's level, another one at the deputy's and senior people in the university level, and then there's some administrative work that goes on as well.

They've done a number of things in the area of administrative efficiency. I'll just give you a couple of examples because there's long lists: sharing internal audit personnel between the universities; joint discussions on uniformity of financial statements for easier comparison; collaboration in assessing a renewal of major administrative information and library computer systems; procurement cards for efficiency of purchasing.

In recruitments and admissions, there's been a number of developments such as a CD-ROM (compact disc read-only memory). In program collaboration, there's joint deans' meetings; there's lecture and seminar exchanges; there's video-linked graduate course in English.

There's promotion of engineering in the high schools in association with the Association of Professional Engineers. There's electronic exchange of engineering courses. There's a number of other things I haven't mentioned, but that gives you

a flavour for it.

Under program development, there's a joint certificate program in occupational health and safety; joint development of the technology assisted adult in continuing education certificate program.

There's a funding review going on right now by DesRosiers on the appropriate formula for funding universities and the factors that should be taken into consideration. And that study will also include the federated colleges and everybody's waiting eagerly for that. Although all parties have been involved in the development of that, we'll probably be sitting down in the next few months to discuss the recommendation that DesRosiers is making on university funding.

The committee reported progress.

MOTIONS

Substitution of Members on Committees

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move, by leave, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the name of Lloyd Johnson be substituted for that of Maynard Sonntag on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Van Mulligan): — The Government House Leader has moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Before putting the question, I can't remember a set of circumstances that has meant that someone other than one of the presiding officers has actually presided, and I want to thank the Clerks for their assistance and thank all of the members for their cooperation today. Thank you very much.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

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