

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to present petitions. I'm reading the prayer and this petition does with the fuel tax:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present comes signed by the individuals or people from the good community of Govan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of the citizens concerned about forced municipal amalgamation, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And this is signed by folks in Melfort, Kinistino, and Beatty.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on the issue of municipal consolidation. These are all petitioners from the RM (rural municipality) of Saskatchewan Landing in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And as I said, it's signed by the residents of the RM of Saskatchewan Landing.

I so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition for citizens who are opposed to forced municipal amalgamation, and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And it's signed by residents of Govan, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I present a petition with citizens concerned about the high price of fuel, and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

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

The petitioners are from Chaplin, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present this morning that deals with the reserve account confiscation, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon permanently and rule out any plans it has to confiscate municipal reserve account.

And the petitioners come from Govan and Bengough.

I do so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today regarding the high cost of fuel.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

And the petitioners that have signed this are from the good town of Spiritwood and Shell Lake.

I so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with enforced amalgamation, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the community of Moose Jaw.

The Speaker: — Order, order, please.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present

a petition to reduce fuel tax by 10 cents a litre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

This petition is signed by the good citizens of Carrot River, Arborfield, Nipawin, and Ridgedale, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

These are petitions of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

To halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities;

To provide funding for the Swift Current Regional Hospital;

To cause the federal and provincial governments to reduce fuel taxes.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and to the members of the Assembly, I would like your indulgence for a moment to introduce a group here that has filled the galleries.

And some of you may be aware that I recently proclaimed April 30 to May 6, School Safety Patrol Week in our province. I, myself, was a school safety patroller way back when and I found that that experience taught me a great deal about some of the skills needed to prosper in our society. Those being leadership, responsibility, and commitment to the well-being of others.

I would ask all members of the Assembly to please welcome the school patrollers who are here visiting today.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, three very special guests who are seated in your gallery.

Mr. James Lee, vice-general manager for Everlight Travel from T'aipei. Mr. Charles Wang, Canadian manager for Everlight Travel from T'aipei. Mr. Henry Yau, senior supervisor from TPI Canada, from Richmond, B.C. (British Columbia).

Mr. Speaker, Everlight Travel is the major tour company for

Taiwanese tourists into Canada. In total the company handles international travel arrangements for approximately 10,000 Taiwanese tourists annually.

We're pleased to inform you and all members that Everlight Travel has placed the province of Saskatchewan in their 2000 travel itinerary. TPI Canada will be handling all the ground arrangements for Everlight Travel in Canada.

Mr. Ted Hornung, from Tourism Saskatchewan, who is also seated in your gallery, will escort the party on a tour of some fascinating Saskatchewan destinations — Wanuskewin, Manitou Springs Resort, and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) depot, to name a few.

We're very pleased that they are visiting our province. We welcome many more Taiwanese tourists as they choose a Saskatchewan holiday. And I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming our guests from Taiwan. Ni Hao.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through to the members of this Assembly, the safety patrollers who are gathered here today.

And I would like to beg the indulgence so that we can get to know a little bit about who each other is in this House. And so I'm going to read through the names of the communities from where these safety patrollers come. And as I read the name of the community, I would also ask the member representing that area, from either side of the House, to stand. I would ask the safety patrollers from that area and their chaperones to stand.

There are 177 patrollers here, 27 chaperones, and two others under the guidance of Louise Houldsworth and Maureen Murray. So welcome to all of you.

And we have safety patrollers here from Carrot River. Carrot River students stand, please. There we go. And you can be seated then.

Estevan. Hudson Bay. Kindersley. Lanigan. Maidstone. Over on this side, Milt . . . Oops. Martensville. Moose Jaw. Nipawin. North Battleford. Prince Albert. Rosetown. Regina. Saskatoon. St. Walburg. Turtleford. Unity. Warman. Watrous. And Weyburn.

Let's welcome these safety patrollers to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleague from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley in welcoming the 177 patrollers and 29 chaperones here today on the occasion of their 10th school safety patrol jamboree being held this week.

School safety patrollers from across the province, as we know, come together for this jamboree once a year. This is a particularly special occasion as it's the 10th anniversary. These are students who are recognized for their contributions throughout the year as safety patrollers in their home

communities. Various activities are planned for them this week in Regina.

Safety patrollers help make our schools a safer place, especially for fellow students. Safety patrollers help fellow students cross the street safely as they go to and from school.

And I would like particularly to recognize the large contingent of safety patrollers from Carrot River Valley and welcome them all here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly three guests in your gallery from the riding . . . one from the riding of Rosetown-Biggar and two from Regina — the famous grandmother who was working on the farm crisis, Carol Skelton, from Harris, Saskatchewan.

And she is a good grandmother. Today she's with two of her granddaughters from Regina — Wendy and Tenille. She is here for the music festival. And I just think that that commitment to family is great and we should give them a good welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly . . . Although I welcome all the safety patrollers here today, there is one that's particularly near and dear to my heart. She calls me mom although I'm not, by blood, her mother. She spent many, many hours with you. She's sitting up here. If you would stand, Alyssa Knaus.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a constituent of mine. Rod Thompson is in the east gallery and he is here today with the safety patrollers. Rod is a constable with the Estevan city police and he is also my nephew, so that makes this a little more special. And Rod also has a brown belt in karate and he is a champion kick boxer. So we had better all watch ourselves today.

While I'm standing, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome the safety patrollers from Estevan as well as from the other areas of the province.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming Rod and the other members. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a very special individual who is part of the delegation but who is involved in her community in a very strong way — a lady by the name of Theresa Rederburg-de

Both. She is a social worker with the Hudson Bay School Division, a very dedicated individual who works very, very hard in the interests of children in the Hudson Bay School Division. And I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming her today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is one of the safety patrollers that I would like to introduce in particular. A young man who through family has a long-standing relationship with this Assembly — two grandfathers who have been members of this Assembly and cabinet ministers — Riley Snyder. Riley, if you would stand please — grandson of Gordon Snyder and the former Eiling Kramer — Riley Snyder.

Thank you and welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Statistics Canada Employment Numbers

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's Friday, and we all know that Friday means more good news. Today's good news, Mr. Speaker, is brought to you by Statistics Canada and it concerns the number of people working in our province. I am very pleased to advise the Assembly that today there are nearly 10,000 more people working than there were a year ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — And fully 95 per cent of those new jobs, Mr. Speaker, were full-time jobs. Those new jobs are in manufacturing, they were in construction, they were in transportation, in warehousing, in the utilities, in finance, in insurance, in real estate — let me take a breath — in leasing, in the service industry, and other primary industries. Not only are there more people working but I am very happy to tell you that there are 8,700 fewer unemployed people today than there were a year ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, that is a significant number because it tells you that it drops down our unemployment rate by nearly a full 2 points to 5.4 per cent. I'd be very remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not note that my home city of Regina has the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation, and Saskatoon's not too far behind. Please let's celebrate this good news.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Waste Minimization Award Ceremony in Weyburn

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council and Tetra Pak Canada sponsored Saskatchewan's fourth waste minimization award ceremony in Weyburn recently. And I'm pleased to advise the hon. members of this House that the town of Maple Creek, and Maple Creek and District Opportunities Inc. were the recipients of the

partnership award at those particular ceremonies.

Now that award recognizes projects or programs that demonstrate the benefits of co-operation and was presented specifically in recognition of their combined efforts in reducing waste in the municipal landfill.

This project has recycled more than 216 million metric tonnes . . . I'm sorry, 216 metric tonnes of waste — there isn't that much waste in the southwest — during the past year and more than double the previous year's totals. Now since that project began in 1996, more than 537 tonnes have been diverted from the landfill site.

Maple Creek Opportunities Incorporation provides the recycling facilities, with the town of Maple Creek doing the collection, and this partnership provides a win/win situation for everyone involved. It's a prime example of the innovative spirit that thrives in southwest Saskatchewan.

The town of Maple Creek benefits from having a greatly reduced amount of material going to their landfill site, and the Opportunities Incorporation receives a manageable workload for its staff and the comfort of financial stability. The business community in Maple Creek receives regular pickup of recyclable materials, and everybody wins.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Matters Raised During Question Period

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, or as the Leader of the Opposition so eloquently says when he stumbles to his feet to question the Premier about his future employment opportunities — well, well, well, well, well.

The MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from the bat cave has given us all another lesson in how facts should never interfere with a good line. And once again, he has lowered the bar on his own and his party's credibility. He's the limbo dancer of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

First we had the rabid bats in the hospital, terrifying the people of Regina by having bats assist at the birth of every child in southern Saskatchewan. Turns out one bat had been seen once, and that rabid bats in Regina are rare as Tories without a rap sheet. But never mind, Mr. Speaker, the headline is all that counts.

Bats may be blind, Mr. Speaker, but at least they get where they're going, and their squeaking has a purpose.

Then yesterday we had the bat boy announcing the death of the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker, complete with supporting cast. The only problem, of course, as described in today's *The Leader-Post* is that the facts were wrong — too bad.

Of course he had a good teacher in his leader who was completely wrong in his questions about AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) a few days ago. But then, Mr. Speaker, bats fly in flocks. Holy misrepresentation, Batman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Women of Distinction Awards

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition I would like to congratulate all the nominees for the YWCA Women of Distinction Awards. And I would especially like to congratulate the winners.

All of these women are to be congratulated for the energy and dedication they bring to their individual fields and for the distinction and contribution that they have each made to their home communities and to the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the member opposite, as last night I also had the pleasure of attending the 18th annual YWCA Women of Distinction Awards in Regina.

And this event is held to pay tribute to women from across southern Saskatchewan who give of themselves and enrich our community. And you know, I wouldn't have wanted to be on the selection panel last night, Mr. Speaker, because these were outstanding, outstanding people that were nominated.

And because their names will be familiar to so many, I want to briefly mention the categories: Dr. Roberta McKay in health and wellness; Jean L. Okimasis in arts and culture; Susan Barbara Barber in business, labour and professions; Doris Sheldon, co-founder of SOFIA House, in community and humanitarian service; Georgina McKillop Daniel of Avonlea in contribution to a rural community; Shawna L. Argue in science and technology; Betty Lou Dean in sports and recreation — she used to be my manager when I worked at Massey Road pool. Kim Delesoy was named young woman of distinction. Jean E. Thomas received the 2000 Women of Distinction Lifetime Achievement Award for her 40 years of working with Scouts in Saskatchewan.

And I'd just like to thank the YWCA for all the time and effort they put into the gala, it's a hugely successful event; and the talent, energy and leadership of these women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Application of the Provincial Sales Tax

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, if the opposition is effective, the system can work and the Legislative Assembly can actually take care of the people's agenda.

Since the provincial budget, many of us who represent oil- and gas-related industries in this province, and they're all on this side of the House, I might point out . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — . . . have been trying to get details from this government on how its taxation policy would affect

Saskatchewan business people in this industry and their employees.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition MLAs and the businesses themselves were unable to get answers. Road bans had come off. Decisions needed to be made. And one business would get one answer from these government members and another business would get another.

So yesterday we were pleased to ask some questions in this Legislative Assembly that actually got the right answer and got the correct answer for the businesses in this area.

In fact, Sage Well Services, Sage Well Services, who were represented here yesterday in the gallery, had already sent their invoices out for April and had charged the PST (provincial sales tax) based on this forthcoming government. They'd already charged the PST.

As it turns out, because of the efforts of this opposition, they were able to send out another fax that said they didn't have to charge the PST.

We take a great deal of pride in being able to achieve that on behalf of the people of this province. It's good practice for the soon and coming day when we'll be the provincial government here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Memorial Day in the Netherlands

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, 55 years ago this month Canadian troops completed the liberation of the Netherlands from the Nazi occupation that had lasted since 1940. More than 7,600 Canadians lost their lives during this particular struggle of World War II, leaving what Canadian poet and soldier Earle Birney called, quote, "the grief of the old and the tombs of the young."

Veterans Affairs Canada informs us that yesterday, May 4, was the 55th National Memorial Day in the Netherlands — a day to celebrate that liberation.

Mr. Speaker, the warm bonds of friendship between the people of Canada and the Netherlands, which developed out of the anguish of war, still endures today. In recognition of that friendship, and to keep the memory of the achievements and sacrifices of the men and women who served for Canada, veterans and family members are currently on an official pilgrimage overseas between May 1 and 10.

Mr. Speaker, I have more than a passing interest in this pilgrimage. My family were among those liberated from oppression, a very dangerous oppression, given their wartime activities. And growing up in wartime Holland, I learned of my family's gratitude to Canada. Fifty-five years after the fact, I join my family in expressing gratitude to Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Funding of Film Festival

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan has a Film and Video Classification Act that governs the exhibition and distribution of films in this province. One of the films to be shown at the Queer City Film Festival is in direct contravention of section (7) of these regulations. Section (7) says if a film contains scenes depicting urination or defecation for sexual gratification, it will not be approved.

This is exactly the topic of the film *Hose*, which is one of the films to be screened as a part of your taxpayer-funded film festival. This film would not be allowed in any Saskatchewan theatres, yet is part of your government's funded porn festival.

Mr. Premier, how can you continue to support a festival which will be screening a porn film that directly contravenes your very own Act.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'll take a moment this morning to reflect on some of the words that have been written by the editorial boards across the province in the two larger centres. And I want to share this with the member opposite.

And it's time to tell the opposition politicians to drop their tiresome posturing and granting decisions made by Saskatchewan's Arts Board over their lifetime. And then the editorial from the Regina paper says this, the quality of political debate in this province is less important today:

... than health, education, and agriculture — issues the Saskatchewan Party has virtually ignored since it started obsessing over this silly and inconsequential film festival five days ago?

(But) No, but titillating talk of government-funded porn surely is a great source of headlines and a great vehicle to get your mug on the six o'clock news. And . . .

What's the point in doing your job of (facilitating and) scrutinizing the public purse when it's so much easier to mobilize public outrage . . .

And this is what you've been doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a government who doesn't mind breaking their own laws. Mr. Speaker, the film *Hose* is not deemed suitable for the Saskatchewan public theatres according to your very own Act, and yet we are going to have funding to show this film in a public library here in Saskatchewan. We don't know if the rest of the films contravene the Act or not, but the public is outraged and people are cancelling their SaskTel long distance service because of this.

Mr. Premier, your government defends panel discussion and you defend the screenings, yet you can't even read the names of these films in the legislature. The media can't print the names in the paper and radio, and radio and television can't even say the

names.

Mr. Premier, how can you continue to spend taxpayers' dollars on pornography when people in this province are so outraged with everything you're doing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that since this film festival has been in Regina, it's been held at the public library. And I want to go on and say to the member opposite about what else is written into *The Leader-Post* today and in the editorial board from Saskatoon.

They go on to say, Mr. Speaker, that the "Saskatchewan Party MLAs, some of them holdovers from the former Conservative (government) party" have attacked this very film festival since 1994. And the article goes on to talk about the Saskatchewan Party's outrage of which came to this Assembly in 1994 and led by then Mr. Dan D'Autremont. And this is what it says:

Dan D'Autremont, then a Tory, described himself as a "Philistine" when he demanded the end in 1994 to an individual grants to artists. Among the targets of his wrath was \$9,000 provided for an installation entitled "Gaynada."

Which was this same kind of event held in this community, with the same community, of which in 1996, the member from Rosthern took exception to and . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, in the last week we've heard four different ministers speak to this question and not one of them have given us an answer. The minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) says they don't condone pornography. The minister of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) calls the movies "erotica" and compares them to Academy Awards movies. The Minister of Culture says the films aren't pornography, yet even the festival organizers call them pornography.

The Premier won't stand up in the House and talk to the issue, and now the government defends funding this event even though these films would not be approved under their own Film and Video Classification Act. Mr. Premier, it's time to stand up in this House and say that you are doing something wrong. It's time to stop hiding behind the Arts Board and SaskFILM and SaskTel.

Mr. Premier, will you just pull the funding from this festival?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite and to the Saskatchewan Party, and I've been saying this now for the last couple of days and I want to say one more time to the member opposite . . . And I have received now a number of correspondences and I have another one here that I

want to read to the record, from an individual in Regina who talks about the Arts Board and the arts council being in place now in this province for better than 50 years. And what this person says, Mr. Speaker, is that it's a simple and profound fact — and this is an individual who both supports and doesn't support some of the funding over the years — but says this is a fundamental fact that the arts council, the Arts Board should be arm's length from government. And that — what she goes on to say — that the Sask Party, Ms. Draude, obviously does not understand the basic facts of democracy in this province.

And this individual, Mr. Speaker, is from Regina, Saskatchewan, and her name is Hildy Wren-Diaz. She is the individual who has written in and says to the member opposite of the Saskatchewan Party, this is a . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Home Care Services

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, almost every time you're asked to comment on the failing health care reform process, you stress the importance of home care as one of the cornerstones of an efficient public health care system. Every time the NDP (New Democratic Party) closes another hospital, we hear you saying you want to shift some of the resources to home care.

Madam Minister, is that still your position? Do you continue to view home care as a critical part of fixing the broken publicly funded health care system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Home care is a vital component of our health care system and we continue to view it as such. We are interested in always enhancing our home care capabilities and have just completed in February a home care conference bringing together all of the stakeholders in home care and a wide variety of people interested in improving the system. We're waiting for that response or the report from that conference, but we are committed to making the system better.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another question for the minister. Madam Minister, on April 20, the CEO (chief executive officer) of the Living Sky Health District sent a letter to all home care clients. The letter indicates that all home care clients are being assessed in order to identify which clients could be cut off.

Madam Minister, the letter says, and I quote:

Immediately the Living Sky Health District will review the needs of all home care clients and will be assessing the degree of risk to each individual if services are no longer provided.

Madam Minister, how can you say that home care is the cornerstone of your government's health care system when health districts are in the process of shutting down home care services for many clients that we speak to.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few years, we have increased home care services over 100 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Our funding has increased 100 per cent. So we are committed to moving people . . . keeping people in their homes as long as possible, independently living, aging in place. Home care is a cornerstone of our health care system and we intend to keep it that way and intend to continue to build on it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Madam Minister, you keep telling us that home care is a cornerstone of your system, but, Madam Minister, the Living Sky Health District says it is currently spending \$1.8 million on home care but your department is only supplying \$1.3 million for home care services.

Madam Minister, that leaves the district health boards in an impossible situation. And here's what the letter to the home care clients from the CEO says, and I quote:

Those individuals for whom the risk appears to be low will be discharged from the home care services and attempts will be made to put them in touch with someone (who) they may be able to hire privately.

Is that your plan, Madam Minister? Are you planning to privatize the home care system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, home care is the cornerstone of the plans that we are making to improve our health care system, unlike the opposition whose plans are to privatize our health care system, to privatize it to a two-tier health care system, give away our province's medicare system.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. Regrettably I was unable to hear the answer, the final answer.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Unlike the opposition, Mr. Speaker, we have no intention of privatizing our medical care system. We are committed to increasing our funding, improving our services, and we have no intention of — as they say — two-tiered health or privatizing our health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister says she's not going to privatize the health care system but she's forcing district health boards to do it by her lack of commitment.

Madam Minister, it gets even worse. According to Saskatchewan Union of Nurses President, Rosalee Longmoore, you're actually blackmailing districts who will not go along with your privatization plan.

According to Longmoore and I quote:

Boards have been told if this information leaks out, they will be removed from office and the government will appoint a public administrator.

Is that your plan, Madam Minister? If boards won't go along with your two-tiered plan, you're going to have them dismissed and replaced by one of your flunkies?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to speak to the chairperson of the Living Sky Board, and I'm advised by the board Chair that at no time did the board ever indicate to anyone that they would be removed if they released the information to the public. I don't know where that information comes from, but I want to assure the public and I want to assure the House that at no time has that been indicated to that board or any other board, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, we have the letter and it says and I quote again:

Those individuals for whom the risk appears to be low will be discharged from home care services and attempts will be made to put them in touch with someone who they may be able to hire privately.

The letter is in our hands and it should be in yours. Madam Minister, the media today says that you're also waffling about reviewing the system. You're moving from ricocheting from one health care crisis to the next. You attack nurses, you attack district health boards, you attack seniors. Who's next? Now you're attacking the people who require home care.

Madam Minister, the people of Saskatchewan know that they're not the problem, you are. Madam Minister, are you prepared to launch a comprehensive review of the system or are you willing to stand aside and let someone else do it who can?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as the people of this province will know, the Premier of our province has been indicating to the Prime Minister and all of the other premiers in the country that it's really time for Canada to renew its efforts in medicare in this country. We've not had a review since the Hall Commission in 1967. We understand that there may be a possibility of such a review nationally and if there is a possibility we certainly want to participate.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will say this. I've had an opportunity to review the record of the members opposite very carefully through their election campaign material and their newspaper articles and their policy, Mr. Speaker. I can assure members of the public that this province is not interested in moving to

private surgical clinics which is the policy of the Saskatchewan Party.

And that's what we get, Mr. Speaker, if those people ever have a chance to govern this province. We're not going to go there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister has to stand and answer for the policies of her government. First of all you're threatening to remove from home care service, then you're suggesting that they go and hire whatever they can privately. And then on top of it you're threatening district health boards by muzzling them and accusing them if they say anything out of turn, they're going to be removed. Talk about your record and not Ralph Klein's, Madam Minister, what are you prepared to do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. They can stand in the House and every day they . . . or in the public they hammer the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, 35,000 people receive health services in this province each and every day. The system is not perfect, Mr. Speaker, but I can say this: it's the best health care system in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we are the party that brought publicly funded, publicly administered health care to this province and to this country.

Mr. Speaker, at their convention their party members called the principles of the Canada Health Act mindless slogans. We have a Leader of the Opposition that has said that we should get rid of the Canada Health Act.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not interested in getting rid of the Canada Health Act because we don't want to see private hospitals, private surgical clinics, and privatized health care in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Annual Returns Filed by Political Parties

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this government is breaking the film classification Act; they're breaking the Canada Health Act. Let's see if there's any other Acts being broken.

Mr. Speaker, not so very long ago in this very House, the Liberals would be up every day attacking other parties for breaking The Election Act. The Liberals would accuse the other parties of failing to comply with requirements to disclose the names of donors in accordance with the law. The Liberals would say the other parties had broken The Election Act and should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education if he still feels so strongly about compliance with The Election Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite very clearly . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say through you and to the members opposite . . . if the member from Kindersley would quit yelling and hollering from his seat. If he's got a question, fair enough he can ask. But from the question asked, it's perfectly impossible to answer any question because he hasn't asked one.

But while we're on the issue of funding, I think there are many Saskatchewan people who wonder where the \$800,000 that the old Tories had — who's in control of that money? So if the member opposite is curious about money, maybe he could stand and explain how certain members from his caucus, handling \$800,000 of public money — where is that money today, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's get a little more information here. Section 210 of The Election Act says that each party must file its annual return disclosing the names of all donors by the end of April. Yet when we contacted the electoral office yesterday we, the Saskatchewan Party, have filed our return, the NDP have filed their return but, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not yet filed their return.

Mr. Minister, where is it? What's the holdup? Surely it can't take that long to list the donors. Mr. Speaker, I understand that's a pretty short list. Or perhaps, Mr. Speaker, some of them are demanding their money back.

Mr. Minister, why haven't you filed your annual return? Why are you breaking The Election Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the member opposite that obviously the president of the Liberal Party, the president of the NDP Party, the president of the Saskatchewan Party, and maybe the president of the now-in-dormancy Conservative Party would explain where that \$800,000 is. Because many taxpayers are very interested.

I get more calls, I get more calls about where the money went from Grant Devine's administration than I do about the issue that the member who raises the issue of a festival this weekend and about where the \$15 billion in debt went to when certain members of your caucus were part of the previous administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, for the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. I'd ask all hon. members to please come to order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know I cannot understand what the holdup is. I think the Liberals maybe only had one donor. Perhaps the Premier could add some light to this. Maybe he knows how much he gave you.

Mr. Speaker, section 212 of The Election Act says failure to file an annual return within the prescribed time limited is an offence.

Section 213 says a party may be prosecuted for this offence.

So I would ask the Minister of Justice — if he's listening — Mr. Minister, will you be laying charges against the Liberal Party for violating The Election Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that calling on elected members here to explain their party's financing, I think it's very questionable whether these questions are in order. That's one point I want to make.

But secondly, maybe you, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, want to explain how — my understanding is — that companies of Conrad Black donated \$75,000 to your party. Tell me how that works?

And I don't think it's a legitimate question for me to ask you that but maybe you want to tell me whether there's any conflict of interest? Is there any conflict of interest that Conrad Black and his companies would give you \$75,000 and none to our party and there isn't a conflict of interest? You want to mention or talk about that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty shocked at the Deputy Premier because that party accepts — not accepts, demands — a quarter of a million dollars from union members who have no choice over where their funding for political activity . . . (inaudible) . . . That member should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Minister, we're talking about The Election Act and a flagrant violation of The Election Act. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the election should be overturned and we should have a brand new election.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals, the Saskatchewan Party is very proud of our fiscal return. It shows that we raised \$650,000 without a tax credit, without a quarter of a million dollars from the unions, like the NDP got last year. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are abandoning the Liberals and the NDP to support a new movement in this province, and it shows in our fiscal return and it shows in the election result. We got more votes . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'd ask the hon. leader to please go directly to his question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Will you tell the Minister of Education to stop breaking the law and to file his election return?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I noticed clearly the member did not answer my request to comment . . . for him to comment on Conrad Black and his companies giving \$75,000 to this political party, and what were his motives in doing that. What were his motives?

Now let me tell you this, one thing I'll say clearly on financing of political parties. I will not apologize one moment for taking money from the working people of this province one by one by one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I won't apologize. Not . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — When the men and women of this province through their organized unions give money to our political party, I will stand up and defend it any day. But I challenge you, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, stand up and defend the \$75,000 from Conrad Black's companies. And what were his motives in giving that money to your political party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would tell the Deputy Premier that everyone who donated to the Saskatchewan . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Hon. members . . . Order, please. I ask all hon. members to please come to order. There will be opportunity for individual debate. Order! Hon. member from Kindersley and the Deputy Premier, kindly come to order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we've really hit a nerve on the other side. They're confiscating donations from the workers of Saskatchewan — many times against their will — for a government that's running this province into the ground.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has always said that we could run this government more efficiently on less money. And if you want proof, just look at the fiscal returns. Because of their tax credits, because of their donations from the unions, the NDP raised \$1.6 million — almost a million dollars more than the Saskatchewan Party. And they actually spent \$1.8 million last year.

But when the ballots were counted, Mr. Speaker, it was the Saskatchewan Party that got the most votes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — All the money, all the money that the

Premier absconded from workers of Saskatchewan could not buy him a majority government. He had to use the taxpayers' dollars to do it.

Mr. Premier, why are you not allowing your minister . . . Why are you allowing your minister to violate The Election Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say again, and not to be repetitious but I will repeat a couple of things. First of all the Liberal Party in this province, whether you like them or don't like them, the fact of the matter is they have a proud history, they have a proud history in this province, and they will defend their record on collecting money.

But I want to say to the member opposite, when he steps out of the House, when he . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, when that member steps out of the House, I ask him to defend and to explain whether a penny of the \$800,000 that was in a bank account from the old Tory Party, whether one penny went to his campaign. Explain that.

And also will he explain whether he sees any conflict of interest in Conrad Black, from out of this province, giving 75,000 to his party to try to influence election when he owns the newspapers? Is there any conflict there?

You take care of your party and I'm sure the Liberals and NDP will take care of those.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POINT OF ORDER

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. I'd ask all hon. members to please come to order.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise actually on a point of order. I would like the Speaker to review the line of questioning by the Leader of the Opposition that we've recently experienced in question period.

It is my understanding, it is my understanding that the government can be questioned on administrative competence within its jurisdiction and that it cannot be questioned on party policy. And I would like the Speaker to make a ruling on that line of questioning for us in the very near future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — . . . respond to the point of order with a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the members of the . . . members . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. There has been a point of order that needs to be ruled on. Okay. There cannot be another point of order, but you may speak to the point of order. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all members of the Legislative Assembly have right to speak to legislation that has been passed and is under the jurisdiction of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, that includes The Election Act. And my questions were in regard to The Election Act and the fact that that Election Act was being broken. Absolutely any member of this Assembly may speak to The Election Act. It has been done in the past, Mr. Speaker, by members of the opposition. It has been done by members of the Liberal Party. I would suggest that you discount the point of order by the Liberal leader.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. members, I will review that. But I will at this point in time point out that Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, in paragraph 409(6), does indicate that:

A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government.

And further, further, and I appreciate . . . I take that point and I will review it further, but I'm just reminding members also . . . Order, Order.

I just want to point out that further in Beauchesne's, in paragraph 410(17). Order, please. Order. I just want to point out another paragraph in Beauchesne's which indicates:

Ministers may not be questioned with respect to party responsibilities.

I will further review your point of order, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, but I just point out to members to remind them that this is the tradition of the House, set on precedent.

An Hon. Member: — The precedents that you made?

The Speaker: — The precedents that are in Beauchesne's. Order. Order.

Would you like to stand on your feet, hon. member, and challenge what I've just said?

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, we are just dealing with the issues as we have seen them enacted in this House in the past number of years, sir, when you yourself were an MLA.

The Speaker: — Is that . . . hon. member, is that a challenge of the Chair's ruling on this point of order?

Mr. Heppner: — It was just a statement, sir, of my observation of what's happened in this House in the past.

The Speaker: — Hon. member, again, what I quoted to you is from tradition and precedence from Beauchesne's — from long-standing parliamentary rules for this House, and our own House, from the members of this House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 34 — The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 34, The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — I would ask the hon. member from Kindersley and the hon. member from Rosthern to please come to order.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was expecting this. I rise today to move second reading of The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments I'm now introducing are designed to streamline the process for dealing with disputes between landlords and tenants regarding security deposits.

Mr. Speaker, The Residential Tenancies Act was amended in 1997 to introduce several changes, most notably to increase the maximum security deposit a landlord could require from a tenant.

Landlords were also required, within five days of the termination of a tenancy, to refund the security deposit to the tenant or apply to the Office of the Rentalsman for a hearing to determine the disposition of the deposit. The intent was to ensure that disputes in this area were settled and refunds paid to tenants as soon as possible. When the process was introduced, it was reorganized . . . it was recognized that it would increase the workload in the Office of the Rentalsman. Mr. Speaker, the increase has been substantial.

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, when the process was introduced, it was recognized that it would increase the workload in the Office of the Rentalsman and consequently, Mr. Speaker, that's proven to be the case. The increase has been substantial. There are now about 5,000 security deposit hearings annually as compared to 1,000 before.

In 2,000 of these, Mr. Speaker, the tenant doesn't appear at the hearing, and another 2,000 the tenant's forwarding address is not known so that the tenant can't be notified of the hearing. As well, Mr. Speaker, experience indicates that in 80 per cent of hearings involving security deposits, tenants don't appear to dispute the matter.

Mr. Speaker, this is plainly inefficient, time consuming, and costly for the Office of the Rentalsman as well as for landlords who appear at these hearings. Mr. Speaker, landlords have also expressed concern that five calendar days is not enough time in which to determine whether they need to make a claim, and if so attempt to resolve the matter with the tenant before applying for a hearing.

The amendments in this Bill will substantially reduce the numbers of hearings scheduled. Hearings will be scheduled only where the tenant actually disputes the landlord's claim to the security deposit. Landlords will, with these changes, Mr. Speaker, have seven business days at the end of a tenancy in which to return the security deposit to the tenant or apply for a hearing and supply details about the claim to the Rentalsman.

The Rentalsman will notify the tenant about the application and the nature and amount of the claim. If the tenant wants to dispute the claim, the tenant will then have seven business days to advise the Rentalsman. It's at that point, Mr. Speaker, that a hearing would be scheduled.

Mr. Speaker, this revised process has several benefits for tenants and landlords. Most significantly, both will have more time to attempt to resolve a dispute before the landlord must make application to the Rentalsman. Landlords will be able to assess the amount of a claim before making the application which is often not possible within the current five days, and tenants will be advised about the details of the claim and be in a better position to know whether or not to dispute that claim. At present, tenants are only advised that a hearing will be held.

Mr. Speaker, one new provision is being introduced with these amendments. A new provision will permit the Department of Social Services to provide the addresses of tenants who are receiving social assistance to the Rentalsman for the purpose of providing them with information about claims and notices of hearings.

The purpose of the new provision, Mr. Speaker, is to offer more assurance that these tenants will receive the information they need about a landlord's application. These tenants will also be given information on how to dispute a claim and an explanation of the consequences if an order is made in favour of the landlord.

Mr. Speaker, this is important information as payments to the landlord by the Department of Social Services, based on an order of the Rentalsman, will be recovered from their future social assistance payments.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing the importance of these amendments, consultations were undertaken with several tenant advocacy groups and with the Saskatchewan rental industry housing association. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, there are extensive consultations with both groups. And I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that they agree with those amendments.

In addition, the amendments will result in substantial savings for the Office of the Rentalsman. Mr. Speaker, we're always interested in efficient operation of government activities. And holding hearings only where a tenant advises the Rentalsman that the tenant disputes the landlord's claim, will reduce the

number of hearings by 4,000, saving, Mr. Speaker, approximately \$185,000.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to amend The Residential Tenancies Act and to make consequential amendments to The Saskatchewan Assistance Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few comments regarding Bill No. 29, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000, before I move to adjourn debate.

In listening to the minister give his reasons and his arguments for the current legislation to be brought forward, Mr. Speaker, it certainly appears that there are some points that need to be addressed. And I appreciate the fact that . . . some of the things the minister was pointing out. The fact that when the Act was changed a while back acknowledging some of the concerns in regard to security deposits, the department at that time was not aware of the load it might put on the department and certainly on the Office of the Rentalsman.

And I don't know if anybody was, Mr. Speaker. I'm not exactly sure if anyone had any idea of what type of workload and the fact that it would appear from the minister's comments that we actually have in many cases, part of the workload is somewhat frivolous in regards to the claims made by tenants or landlords or vice versa in regards to security deposits and rental agreements.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon we had the privilege of talking to the Minister of Social Services regarding rental rates and the problems that people on assistance have in receiving or finding good quality housing at a level that they can afford.

And certainly one of the issues that becomes a major problem for people is the level of security deposit that is needed in order to rent a property.

And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that when a person puts down security and the level of security that they're putting down, they want to feel at the end of the day if they have looked after that property, that they're indeed going to be reimbursed the security agreement and the funds appropriately, rather than having to go through a hassle for that funding.

However it's important that we do have an advocate available who can listen to disputes and determine the appropriate means of addressing that dispute. Whether it's in favour of the Rentalsman . . . or pardon me, not the Rentalsman — the renter, or indeed the landlord.

So, Mr. Speaker, based on the bit of information we do have at this point in time, we would like to certainly take some more time to review the piece of legislation and to indeed determine that the legislation is going to address and answer some of the concerns in the areas that the minister has brought to our attention today.

And therefore at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 31 — The Police Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Police Amendment Act, 2000. Keeping communities safe, Mr. Speaker, is a top priority for this government. Everyone has the right to feel safe in their homes and communities, and strong community-based police services are a critical component of safety and security.

The amendments I'm putting before the Assembly today reflect the changing face of policing in Saskatchewan. Particularly, Mr. Speaker, these changes are intended to provide for the progressive development of new, community-based policing services in rural and Aboriginal communities in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also provides for clarification of the ability of the minister to appoint a class of special constables, and for a chief of police to directly appoint special constables in their own police service.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the rural municipalities of Corman Park and Vanscoy are operating small police forces to enforce liquor and traffic bylaws under the authority of the special constable appointments.

Mr. Speaker, The Police Act, 1990 sets out detailed provisions regarding the establishment of police services, the governance training and discipline for those police services, as well as establishing the RCMP contracting framework for provincial policing contracts.

Currently urban municipalities with a population over 500 are permitted to form a police service to provide policing services in their communities. No other authorities such as a rural municipality or First Nation are permitted to form an autonomous service under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to permit authorities designated in the regulations, such as a rural municipality or a First Nation, to establish a police service on specific terms and conditions.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased and proud to say that the File Hills Agency First Nations community want to form a stand-alone police service, Mr. Speaker. The new force would operate under the direction of the RCMP during a three-year transitional period, becoming a stand-alone force after that period.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations now have a range of options before them for the delivery of police services on their First Nations and many will choose to use the RCMP as their police service of choice, while some, like File Hills agencies, Mr. Speaker, will pursue, as they are doing and as we're pleased to work with them on this, pursue an independent police service.

The Government of Saskatchewan and the RCMP view these choices as positive developments in the delivery of policing services and look forward to working with First Nations communities in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting time for File Hills Agency, being the first Saskatchewan First Nations police service. Mr. Speaker, File Hills agencies are to be commended for their collaborative approach with the RCMP and Saskatchewan Justice in moving towards this important goal. Their professionalism in this regard generates confidence in the policing community and bodes well for the community at large as well as for ongoing co-operation between existing and developing policing services in the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note too that any police services created pursuant to these new provisions will be subject to the same standard of training and governance as exists in existing municipal police services. In particular the discipline and general ministerial and Police Commission oversight functions under The Police Act, 1990 will apply to such services.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments focus on the ability of The Police Act, 1990, to accommodate new police services arising out of this government's commitment to keeping communities safe through the development of Aboriginal policing services and the delivery of rural municipality policing services.

The government is committed to working in partnership with local authorities such as rural municipalities and First Nations to collectively move forward to recognize new and emerging policing needs in a way that ensures continued professionalism and safety and security in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend the Police Act, 1990.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to The Police Amendment Act, 2000, I want to make a few comments. I understand from this piece of legislation, what the minister is telling us, that it's a way for communities and in particular First Nations people to establish their own police forces.

If I'm not mistaken, there are a number of communities throughout the province already who have some police service of their own. And so I'm not exactly sure what difference this is that . . . over this legislation, over what we already have. But certainly that's an issue that we can address in the near future when we get into debating this Bill a little more extensively.

At first blush it would just appear the Bill offers an opportunity just to form another police force, a private police force, in the province of Saskatchewan.

But I know that there are many communities who are looking at services and basically are looking at ways in which they could meet the needs of their community. Certainly as the minister's indicated, File Hills First Nation, and I know reserves in my area, have talked about policing on their reserves as well, and working together with the RCMP in providing police services to meet the needs of their community.

Certainly it's important for people to understand and to feel that they have a liaison with the police services within their community and the services that they would come to trust.

And, Mr. Speaker, what this piece of legislation appears to be

doing is opening up the door for further extension of private . . . or not private, pardon me, community-based police servicing in the province of Saskatchewan. And we would hope that the legislation is going to provide some very clear direction regarding special forces to ensure that the public of this province are treated fairly and indeed are going to be dealt with fairly by police services across the province of Saskatchewan.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a bit more time to review the legislation and be able to take some time to discuss the issue with concerned groups. And indeed make sure that when we address the issue more carefully, that we are indeed addressing concerns that there might be out there, so that we can address these directly with the minister as we move through the legislation.

And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Energy and Mines Vote 23

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce my deputy minister to my right, Ray Clayton; to his right, Dan McFadyen, who is the assistant deputy minister of resource policy and economics. To my left is executive director of petroleum and natural gas, Bruce Wilson. Behind me is Donald Koop, who is the ADM (assistant deputy minister) of finance and administration. And in the back are Brian Mathieson, director of petroleum development branch; Doug Koepke, manager of accounts; and Pam Schwann, who is our director of mines branch.

Subvote (EM01)

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister. And a special thanks to all of the department officials who have made their attendance in this Assembly today. I'm sure your help . . . with your help we'll get through this much easier.

My first question, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, what decision was made yesterday regarding the PST in the oil and gas industry.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I need . . . and this issue does need some clarification. There were no decisions made yesterday. There were decisions that were made on March 30, on budget day. And I'm going to share with the member . . . And I'm sure he's got copies of them and I'm sure he's well aware that the taxation issues were dealt with in the budget.

There's a document dated March 30 — original in March '85, but revised on March 30 — which outlines the changes with respect to the sales tax that were done as a result of the budget. And I will send these across to you. I don't have a clean copy

now but I will send copies to you.

They were released to the media yesterday and I think satisfied the concerns of the individual who joined us here in the legislature. But there were no decisions made and there were no changes made.

I should also correct, the member from Swift Current has suggested, and not to be argumentative, that there were changes made as a result of these issues being raised in question period yesterday, that's untrue.

Mr. Stewart: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, it seems that the industry believes that changes were made yesterday. In fact, it seems that Mr. Len Stein from Sage Well Services came all the way from Swift Current to see that those changes would be made yesterday. And went away satisfied that they were made yesterday.

And it seems that Mr. Ken Kluz believed that there were some changes to be made and I . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, well he is a former . . . he is a very credible person, a former NDP MLA.

And Mr. Ken Kluz sent us this letter, and I quote:

As you know Saskatchewan people are very excited about the possibility of more oil and gas exploration. In conversation with Doug Anguish, former Minister of Energy and Mines, who is now a Government lobbyist with Renaissance Oil from Calgary tells me the oil industry is very upset with the Saskatchewan Government for the p.s.t. enhancement as changes will cost his company alone 1 million dollars.

At this time they are discussing their options to include less activity in Sask.

Mr. Minister, how do you explain such misunderstanding in the oil and gas industry over your changes to the PST on budget day in light of this?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I would be more than pleased to respond to the question that the member raises, and as well respond to the fax memo that was sent to one of his colleagues at the same time so that we can get on with the estimates with respect to this government's direction in terms of oil and gas mining in our province, creating jobs for Saskatchewan people; a critique hopefully of our projected income from the different resource centres; a critique I'm hoping of our projected expenditures for personnel in different areas of the budget which is what estimates are about, so if I can maybe clear this up we can get on with what estimates are about.

I too have read the fax and upon receiving the fax yesterday afternoon contacted Mr. Anguish to ask what his response might be. And I guess I could summarize it this way: he said to me well, he says, let me begin by telling you that I haven't talked with Mr. Kluz for months — no, for years. So I think, Mr. Speaker, I'll put that issue to rest by suggesting that mischief caused by the Saskatchewan Party with perhaps some of their friends by sending faxes back and forth really don't

have a lot of credibility in my mind so I'm not going to spend a lot of time dealing with it.

The issue that the member raised was with respect to the oil and gas sector and the changes to the provincial sales tax. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that with our tax changes and things are added to a tax regime, there always is concern. And it takes time to develop some understanding as to their application and thereby understanding their impact on the industry. And we're doing that. We have senior officials of government meeting with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers who also have had the document that I've referred the member to — that he could have found had he called my office March 31 or March 30. But he chose not to do that.

But I'm just saying that there are consultations happening with respect to our budget: as we have done, Mr. Chairman, when we introduced the high water cut changes that affect some of the marginal wells in our province; and the consultation that we did when we changed the heavy oil royalty and taxation rates; as we consulted when we were introducing the deep rights reversion that has created millions of dollars of investment in this province.

Mr. Chairman, it's a process that we think works well. We don't always agree with industry, and industry doesn't always agree with us. But that's the way negotiations and discussions work. Their job is to maximize their rate of return on their investment for their shareholders. And our job, as a government, is to regulate to ensure that we have an environmentally friendly industry, and that we maximize the return on the resources for the people of Saskatchewan. Because that resource plays a major, major role in developing for us the ability to have a first-class education system, a first-class health system, put money into roads and highways and, as a matter of fact, to pay the salaries of the members of the legislature.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, are chemicals and all services relating to the oil field service industry exempt now from the PST or not?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I can respond in general terms, but my officials are not from the Department of Finance under whose purview these issues lie. These are officials, as I've introduced, from the Department of Energy and Mines whose job is to regulate and to enforce. And, as matter of fact, on the other side of that, to ensure that we have an expanded and a growing resource sector.

But I can tell the member that mud services, all drilling fluids, and chemicals are subject to tax. And so if that answers his question.

But if the member has some detailed questions with respect to the sales tax and its application, those would be better addressed when the Department of Finance officials are here with the Minister of Finance in order to answer those questions.

Mr. Stewart: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, what about hourly rig rates — does the PST apply to them now or not? And what about, what about the rates for power tong operators, steamers, cementers, and other subcontractors?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think what would be probably more helpful is if I send this document over to the member. He can read it, because it details all of the exemptions and all of the inclusions. And from that he might be able to inform himself so that we can move on with estimates that are more pertinent to the Department of Energy and Mines, here with me today.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, in light of the fact that it seems that all of this changed yesterday, according to the industry, I'm going to continue, I'm going to continue on this line of questioning.

Mr. Minister, what items does this industry still have to pay the PST on?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. The member from Kindersley was engaging the House in dialogue, and I didn't hear the member's question.

Mr. Stewart: — I'll ask it again then. Mr. Minister, what items does the industry still pay the PST on?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I've forwarded the document. He can read it for himself.

(1130)

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I don't think this document will be extremely helpful since it was published in March, March 30, and according to the industry this has all changed as of yesterday. So I'd like an answer as of today, please.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Maybe the member could tell me who in the industry is suggesting that the changes were as of yesterday. From my perspective it was the member from Swift Current who's indicated the changes were made — and you — as of yesterday.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials. Just as a point of clarification I guess since I've been brought in to the debate by the minister, I want to point out to him that there was indeed so much confusion on this particular issue — on the very issue we raised yesterday in the legislature — that the gentleman that was here yesterday from Sage well services actually sent out all of his April invoices charging the PST to all of his customers for rig rights which we find out yesterday is exempt.

There was another similar company in Swift Current, there's another similar company in Swift Current, smaller but similar to Mr. Stein's that indeed was getting conflicting reports from the Department of Finance. And, Mr. Minister, with the greatest amount of respect, we did try to get the answers for them through the normal process. We did phone the Finance officials, we phoned the Finance minister's office, and we couldn't get an answer.

Road bans are off. These people are making decisions now for their busy time of year, as you well know — I know you know the industry. It was very important for them to understand whether they were to charge the PST on their invoices. Some

were, in the case of the latter smaller company I mentioned; some were not; and some had sent the PST out.

So as of yesterday the gentleman that was here from Sage well services in my presence was actually on his cellphone to his support staff back in Swift Current, saying send out a fax telling our clients they don't have to charge the PST. That sounds like yesterday became the date where this issue was clarified. And frankly, I appreciate the clarification, I appreciate the meeting we had with the Finance minister's office, and I know the industry appreciates it.

So I guess my . . . I guess the one question that I would have to the minister on this particular issue is that since that clarification yesterday, or the change in decision, or however it should be characterized occurred yesterday, was very helpful to the oil and gas industry in the province — and it was; it was very helpful — I guess I would echo the sentiments of the minister from Thunder Creek by asking for just a similar clarification or a commitment to a very quick clarification as it relates to all of the rest of the industry and whether the PST should be charged on other areas of the industry or not.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I can and will, as I have in the past, commit, and I've had meetings with this member with respect to issues in his area in terms of development and questions that he might have. I sit in this House every day, as he does; when there are questions or concerns, information is available through me directly, through my office, or through the Department of Finance. There's a web site set up that disseminates information in this new era of technological achievement and advancement.

These pieces of information certainly should be available and we want them to be available. I would not suggest that there are times when the information flow is not what it could be or not what it should be. And I think that there will be interpretations with respect to different issues within the tax system and the tax base. We intend to meet with, work with industry — both the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the service industry — and attempt to in areas where there is no, I guess clear understanding, to clarify that.

And as I've said, meetings between those associations and senior officials of this government will take place and will happen. And I can only say that if there are areas where information hasn't flowed as it could have or should have, I would apologize, and I will do all in my power to ensure that the correct information goes to the people who need it in order to do their business and I give that commitment to the member and all of his colleagues.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, why did it take Saskatchewan Party lobbying and until yesterday for you to make changes or as you prefer to call them, clarifications, to the expanded PST in the oil and gas industry?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, it had absolutely nothing to do with the Saskatchewan Party in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, you talk about the good working relationship you

have with this industry. What consultations did you have with them before budget day regarding expansion of the PST?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, there are issues that are dealt with that are part of a budget process and are dealt with in a different fashion than others.

I can say that my department has had interaction with the industry on an ongoing basis. I can also say that the Vicq report was a document that was public in this province, making suggestions to the government in terms of a major reduction in income tax which has taken place — the largest income tax reduction in the history of this province, which will be a major benefit.

We didn't share that information with industry because those are initiatives that are done as a result of a budget process that is not public and done finally through public consultations. But I can say that our record of interaction with industry and consultation and coordinating initiatives and different projects has been one that I think has been very well received by industry over the past.

And as I have said, there are times when we don't agree. I think that's a natural course of negotiations, but we try to find consensus and I would say for the most part we have. If the member is trying to suggest that this is a government that doesn't consult and doesn't work with industry, I totally disagree with him.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — By leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, a group that we have in the Speaker's gallery, the Special Education Review Committee: Christine Boyczuk, director of education, Davidson School Division; Bob Green, chairperson, Saskatchewan Valley Board of Education; Dr. Len Haines, professor in the department of educational psychology and special education, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan; Elaine Billay of Meath Park, perennial volunteer and parent representative; Jean Lendzyk, a resource teacher with the Shamrock School Division and past president of the council for exceptional children; Janice Charlton, director of special education for the Department of Education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the members of the Special Education Review Committee. They have been extremely active, having been set up in September of 1998. Since that time they have held public consultations in 11 Saskatchewan communities, met with 39 partner organizations and groups, received over 200 written briefs, visited 20 schools, and met with 21 school division teams, and have reviewed the current research for an effective practice with regard to special education.

They have been a very busy group and I would like all members of the Assembly to welcome them to the Assembly and thank them for the great work they have done.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Why is the member for Kelvington-Wadena on her feet?

Ms. Draude: — . . . leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Draude: — I'd like to join with the Minister of Education in welcoming the Special Education Review Committee.

I've been around the province as well and I know how hard you've been working because the school divisions I've been meeting with have told me. And they've also said they're looking forward to your review results and they're looking forward to the benefits it's going to bring to the children of this province. I commend you for your work and I look forward to talking to you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Energy and Mines Vote 23

Subvote (EM01)

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, what items will the mining industry now be paying PST on in light of yesterday's interesting changes with regard to the oil and gas industry?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, before I answer the question, I too want to bid welcome to the Special Education Review Committee. I have some understanding of the importance of your work. My youngest daughter was born with a learning disability and we've had some interaction with the school system over the years. And I really do appreciate your work, and I look forward to some very positive recommendations to government as a result of your work. So thanks for that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that information is contained in the document that I sent to the member just a couple minutes ago. He probably had a chance to read it by now so he will know.

Mr. Stewart: — Well I've already — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister — I've mentioned how much credibility we think this document has now in light of changes . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's marked the 30th. It's dated March 30.

Mr. Stewart: — Yes. And as of yesterday it seems that there were some changes, at least as regards the oil and gas industry. Now whether you call them changes or clarifications, it seems that they're different from what's contained in this document.

Now I'm going to ask one more time: what changes, or what items, are mining companies subject to the PST on, and which ones are now exempt?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, the same ones that were in that document listed as of March 30, which is about a month or so ago. And I want to clarify just one more time for the member — there were no changes yesterday. That document is the same today as it was yesterday, the same as it was on March 30 of the year 2000 AD, and if the member would take the chance and the opportunity to read it, he will understand quite clearly.

Again, let me just close by clarifying that there were no changes yesterday. That document is the same yesterday as it was on March 30 and the information that he's asking for is contained in that document.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, what's the problem then? Why does the oil and gas industry now believe that they've been granted some concessions, and where was the breakdown in communications since March 31?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, that document's been available since March 30. There have been no changes. I've made that clear to the member opposite. There is a change in terms of some of the taxation as a result of the expansion of provincial sales tax, but there are also some very important exemptions. And if the member will read that document, he will know that we were trying to ensure to the best of our ability that the oil and gas sector remains in a competitive environment here in this province.

And I also would be very interested to share with the member, if he's interested in moving on to some of that, a description of what the activity has been in the past year and what it's going to be in this future year in terms of the record number of wells that are being drilled in this province, the massive amount of investment that is happening as a result of the environment that we think industry and the government have worked together to create, the number of jobs that are directly as a result of the oil and gas and the mining sector. I'd be willing to share all of that information with him.

But I think, Mr. Chairman, and I'm quite concerned, that members of the opposition will continue to do what they have been doing. They've challenged and voted against a budget that delivered the biggest tax decrease in the history of this province in terms of personal income tax. Yes, there were some changes in terms of the expanded PST, which is what they've attempted to focus on. And I understand that. I sat in opposition and I recognize that as being a process that takes place.

But I also know that the members opposite have the responsibility to critique this government's, this budget's expenditures as it relates to the Department of Energy and Mines, and I'm very anxious to share that with them.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, perhaps the minister misunderstood my question.

The main thrust of my question was, since the industry seems to

have a different understanding of what happened yesterday with regards to the PST than the minister does, how did the communications breakdown occur? I mean do you not talk to these people at all?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, if there's misinformation and miscommunication, it's coming from right over there.

We have been dialoguing with industry. We're going to continue to work with them. As I said, there might be some areas that need clarification. And in those areas, we're going to do that. That's part of our job. That's part of our role.

Now I understand as well it's your job to create an image of a government that is not responsive and not listening to industry. And I understand that. I understand that quite clearly. But that's not the fact.

Mr. Stewart: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Since I can't get an answer on that question, I'll move on.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers maintains that Saskatchewan is the highest-taxed jurisdiction or the highest-cost jurisdiction for them to do business in Canada, and one of the highest in the world. What are you planning to do about that?

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say that we recognize the level of taxation in this province only too well. And we have been working very diligently to ensure Saskatchewan is competitive with respect to investment, global investment community, in as much as we can and in as much as our provincial finances will allow us to do that.

But I want to remind the member opposite that there are pressures in all areas of this government, not only from the resource sector, with respect to tax reduction. And we have made some moves in that regard. And I think the member, to be fair, will recognize that we have made some changes.

Is there more that we can do? I want to say that we on an ongoing basis work with industry to deal with all areas of cost of doing business in this province, not only royalties and taxation, but access through municipalities, access to the land, facilitating through the Department of Environment access and allowing them to do their job and working with them to do their job.

But I want to also remind the member that this province in not unlimited resources. You guys, in about a two-week period here, were calling for expenditures of about 1.2 billion over and above what this government had budgeted. And that's fine. I understand that, I don't mind that. But there's got to be some give and take, and you move in areas where you can, and you only spend as much where your revenue base allows you to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are alternatives to that which are partly alternatives that were used in the 1980s that create for us a situation where we can't move as much on taxation as we'd like. Because our third biggest expenditure is interest on the

public debt that was rung up during the 1980s.

And the member will know that. He's been a political person for many years, as I understand it. He will know when the debt was rung up. He can read the balance sheet. He will know that we spend our third biggest expenditure on interest, but I don't want to dwell on that.

But we can spend over and above what we generate, but what that means is that our kids are going to be paying for that somewhere down the road. And I'm not willing to go there and this government's not willing to go there, because we're committed to balancing our budgets, we're committed to tax reductions when this province can afford it and as it can afford it, and we're going to continue to do that.

Now with respect to the resource sector, I can tell you that negotiations are ongoing, discussions are ongoing. They don't stop; it's not part of a budget process. And we will be responsive when we can and when we need to.

The oil and gas sector and the mineral sector don't always get what they request but we try and find a balance where we can attract investment which, quite clearly, the numbers will show — if you're interested in hearing about them — we have been able to do. Could we do more? Can we do more? Well I think probably we can and probably we will.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers also makes the claim that Saskatchewan is one of the most regulated and bureaucratic jurisdictions in which they do business, particularly in Canada. They claim that there are multiple levels of approvals required for each and every project, and this adds to their costs and makes it impossible for them to tell their investors when they might see some return on their investment, because they can't predict when they can even start these projects.

What are you planning to do about that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well again, Mr. Chairman, we're planning to streamline, in as much as we can, the access to the resource in an environmentally responsible way.

What I also want to tell the members . . . the member is that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers members tell us that they are very, very satisfied with the access that they have to our department, to this department, that the department is responsive . . . They have access to senior officials within the department on a very short time base; they have access to the minister's office; they have access to the Premier and other cabinet ministers and MLAs. And I think on balance, Mr. Chairman, Saskatchewan has fairly good access.

I want to also say, Mr. Chairman, the complaints I hear from the industry are that they wish Alberta was as responsive and as easily accessible as this province is.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, British Columbia is currently undergoing a tax royalty and regulatory review to make them more comparable or even superior to Alberta in terms of being a low-cost jurisdiction for

producing oil and gas.

Do you have any similar plans for Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, those are discussions that are ongoing, and I can tell you that we intend to keep this province competitive. Whether it's with potash, whether it's uranium, whether it's oil or gas, whether it's in the taxation area, this province will compete.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think the record of this administration since 1991 quite clearly demonstrates that we're willing to listen, that we're willing to make changes, and that we're willing to compete.

Mr. Stewart: — I thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, could you tell us about any new initiatives to be undertaken in this budget year in your department, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I can say there were no major announcements as a result of this budget. But I guess to just share what areas of work our department has been advancing. We've been very much focused on geoscientific data to assist the industry in terms of their knowledge and understanding of our province.

Royalties and taxation are an issue that's ongoing. That's not tied to the budget process. I think I've been in this portfolio for four or five years, and I don't think I can remember a time when we weren't negotiating with the uranium sector, the potash sector, the mineral sector, with the oil and gas sector. That's been ongoing.

There are a couple of other major areas that we are focused on in terms of technological research and development.

We're very involved with the petroleum research centre here in Regina, that's been announced to partnership with industry and with the federal government. The climate change file is the responsibility of my department, working very closely with Environment and Resource Management. We're working to advance the Weyburn CO₂ (carbon dioxide) project to better understand sequestration of carbon dioxide — how it reacts in that kind of a larger environment — working with PanCanadian and other industry players. This is becoming very much an international initiative that I think has some very positive environmental consequences in terms of better understanding how carbon dioxide reacts as it's pumped under pressure into the oil fields that we have.

The other initiative that the department is advancing is the carbon dioxide test centre at the U of R (University of Regina).

So those are just some of the things that we're dealing with. We were looking at the electrical energy file in terms of the changes as deregulation is becoming more and more the norm in terms of operation. So that's one area that we are working toward advancement on.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, just to make sure I've covered all bases here before I move on; could you tell us about any changes or reductions or

eliminations of existing initiatives or services planned for this budget year in your department?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, if I'm understanding the member's question I thank him for that question. We did eliminate one arm of our department. The drafting support services branch was eliminated which resulted in the elimination of four positions, which is very unfortunate. But in terms of the fiscal pressures on the department, looking at the need and where we could best allocate our resources, it became a topic of discussion around budget time and unfortunately resulted in the elimination of that support services unit.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, how much revenue is generated from the 15 cent a litre road tax from the oil and gas industry from fuel used in off-road applications?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, we don't administer that tax. That's under the purview of the Department of Finance and would be best asked of the Minister of Finance when his estimates are up.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know you don't administer that tax. So the reason I asked it, it's such a huge expense to the industry, both the oil and gas industry and the mining industry, and it's one they've been complaining about. I thought perhaps you might have some insight as to how much it actually cost them.

But to move on. Is the Department of Energy and Mines going to digital staking of claims, mining claims, for the whole province?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I am told, Mr. Chairman, by my officials, who work on the day-to-day changes that are taking place within the department that I sometimes am not aware of, so I learn a little bit during estimates too, — and so this is one of the things I've learned today — that we are moving towards digital claim maps.

The department is in the process of having that available to industry and I believe the time frame is within a year . . . within the year. I'm told it'll be done, completed within the year.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, when this happens when we go to digital staking, what sort of cost savings are we looking at for the department?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I'm told by my officials that this will result in a one-stage process as opposed to a multiple stage, which should ultimately result in a lot more convenience for industry and a lot of time saving. They haven't quantified the cost savings at this time; but as this process goes on, I'm assuming we will be able to share that information in terms of cost, once we have a better understanding of it.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd appreciate that information as it comes forward or becomes available.

Saskatchewan appears to be losing out in the competition for oil activity in Western Canada. And I read again from *Oilweek*, Canadian rig activity, week ending March 20, showing Alberta

with 326 active rigs; British Columbia with their tiny oil field, of 45; and Saskatchewan with only 37 active rigs, as of that week.

Do you blame Saskatchewan's high taxes, royalty rates, or both for this?

(1200)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, there are two issues that I would want to bring to the member's attention. That time of the year, as the member may understand representing rural Saskatchewan, we're looking at spring breakup and it's not a time of the year when access in Saskatchewan is at its peak or its optimum.

I also want to indicate to the member that his numbers in terms of drilling rigs are accurate, but that does reflect industry at this time very much focused on natural gas. As he will know, British Columbia has some very prolific natural gas fields as does the province of Alberta. Saskatchewan is unfortunately less endowed with that resource, but that very much reflects spring breakup and the fact that the focus at that time was on natural gas as opposed to heavy oil or other types of oil.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I move the committee report progress.

Mr. Stewart: — I thank the minister and particularly the department officials for helping us out here today. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I want to thank the members opposite for their questions and I look forward to returning to supply yet more details . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Very good, as often as you wish.

The Chair: — On that happy note the committee will pause while the Energy and Mines officials leave and the Education officials gather. Why is the Minister of Education on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — By leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce in the Speaker's gallery, students and chaperones on a visit to the legislature and they are on an Interchange on Canadian Studies. The Interchange on Canadian Studies is a national organization which provides opportunities through student conferences and travel exchanges for grade 11 students from all the provinces and territories to meet with each other. At each conference the students hear ideas from prominent speakers and have opportunities to discuss these ideas with each other.

This year's conference is in Winnipeg from May 6 to 13. The 10 students and two adult chaperones selected are: Sandra Down from Martensville; Janique Dubois from Saskatoon; Catherine Jones from Prince Albert; Rae-lyn Laliberte from Buffalo Narrows; Kevin Lalonde from Prince Albert; Shane Lewis from Regina; Ashley Lundgren from Tompkins; Kindra Majewski from

Wilkie; Erin Ramage from Saskatoon; Chelsea Smith from Moose Jaw; and Bill Harrison from Saskatoon, the provincial coordinator; and Kim Engel, Regina, one of the chaperones.

And I'd ask all members to welcome these Canadian Studies students who will be travelling to Winnipeg. And it is certainly an honour for them to be representing Saskatchewan and I wish them very well indeed. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Why is the member for Kelvington-Wadena on her feet?

Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to join again with the Minister of Education to welcome this very special group of people into the legislature. You must be excited about your trip, and I'm sure that you will represent our province well. I hope you learn a lot, and you learn the advantages of being able to go across this fine country of ours and learn from other students.

So have a good time, and maybe we'll hear from you when you come back.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Education Vote 5

The Chair: — Before I call the first subvote, I invite the Hon. Minister of Education to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To my right, immediate right, is Craig Dotson, the deputy minister of Education. Directly behind me is Ken Horsman, associate deputy minister. To my left and behind me is Michael Littlewood, executive director. And again, further to my right, is Larry Allan, executive director. And directly behind Larry is Cal Kirby, director of facilities planning. And just behind me is Sheila Engele, policy analyst in finance and operations. And in the back is John McLaughlin who is the executive director of the Teachers' Superannuation Commission.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister.

Subvote (ED01)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to the minister and especially welcome to all the officials. I'm delighted to see all of you here today and I imagine we'll get to recognize your faces and know your names because I imagine you'll be back many times.

Mr. Minister, the province of Saskatchewan has many priorities.

Health care and highways and social services are at the top right along with education. And in this province we've had so many people telling us that education is at a crisis state — not just the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) but also the teachers' federation. And many of the parents, as well as some of the students, are saying that we have . . . that education itself is in a crisis.

The SSTA before the budget had asked for a minimum of \$30 million. At the same time we had the teachers' federation, knowing that they were going out for their wages and negotiations and that was something that was up in the air even at the time the budget was released.

And, Mr. Minister, at the same time we received copies and have been waiting for copies of the Special Education Review Committee. We have the role of the schools that are doing a study on education. We have small schools and the sparsity grants and issues that are near and dear to very many people.

Yet during the budget, after the budget, we learned that there was an \$18.5 million increase to operating grants. That's all, Mr. Minister.

We have the core curriculum was in the boards' minds across this province. They knew that there was going to be an increase in all utility rates. They know that there was an increase in fuel so that made a difference to their transportation costs. They know that even with the yearly increase in salaries to many of the teachers, they are going to be facing a lot of difficulties.

So I know that the minister wasn't surprised or shouldn't have been surprised after the budget when people talked about their disappointment.

But before we get into the real basics of and different issues about education, Mr. Minister, I know that people rely on government to bring forward policies for their children and to provide the basics in life. And they rely on the government to provide policies that reflect the needs of the people of the province.

We have to educate our children and get them ready for this global world, and we all know that there's different cultures and lifestyles that have to get ready to deal with. It involves bringing new information to our children.

So, Mr. Minister, to start with, I'd like to find what your vision is for this province, but specifically on issues like the Lord's Prayer. Can you tell me what you as the Minister of Education and you as the Department of Education are saying about the issues involving the morality like Lord's Prayer?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I thank the member for the question. Certainly to begin, we are extremely proud of our education system in Saskatchewan. We are proud of our teachers and we are proud of our local school boards and we are extremely proud of the relationships that have developed within the province of Saskatchewan amongst all the stakeholders.

And to just remind the member of some of the difficulties experienced in other provinces, where they don't have a similar relationship where trustees and teachers and educators and

administrators all work together co-operatively and collaboratively to provide the best possible education for the students of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, just to remind the members opposite, we also must recognize that there is only group that represents teachers in the province of Saskatchewan. This is really unprecedented in most other jurisdictions provincially. The fact is that several groups represent teachers.

And I must remind the members also that there's only one organization representing trustees, and every single school board, school division in the province of Saskatchewan voluntarily belongs to that organization.

And I must also remind the members opposite that when we're talking about our education system, that most of the initiatives, the positive initiatives for students in the province of Saskatchewan are collaborative ventures between all of these stakeholders. And these stakeholders, often in providing information and making key vision statements with regard to our education system, that these statements are ratified by all of the organizations so that it really is a consensus approach. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are extremely proud of our education system.

She also mentioned some of the concerns with regard to funding. And as you know the funding for the province of Saskatchewan from the Department of Education is provided on a foundation operating grant formula, which is an equalization formula. By providing an equalization formula that has been ratified by all the stakeholders, and more recently by an external review committee which included all of the stakeholders, they have stated that this is the best way for the province to provide grants to school divisions and we strongly support this concept.

And what it does is it allows for equity and equitable opportunity for learning experiences throughout this province — urban, rural, northern, or extreme remote areas. So we have an equitable distribution. We have equitable learning experiences in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now she asked a specific question with regard to the Lord's Prayer and just to provide that information to the member, the Constitution of Canada does provide some clarification with regard to the issue of the Lord's Prayer in our school systems throughout Canada.

The Education Act, 1995 does include a clause as well which is a permissive clause and allows for school boards to determine and decide whether the Lord's Prayer will be used at the beginning of the school day or whether they choose not to adopt this particular form of recognition or spirituality within our school system.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1215)

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Minister, you talked about the wonderful relationship that you have with the shareholders and the stakeholders in education, but you failed to talk about the fact that we have teachers that are ready to go on

strike. And we have one of the main voices at the table — the wage negotiations — the SSTA, who are paying for 60 per cent at least of the salaries, don't have a voice in those negotiations. So we won't go there right now. But the . . . (inaudible) . . . isn't something that maybe I think most people are seeing through.

Mr. Minister, one of the other areas that I'm wondering is what has your department done on sex education. Do you have an issue . . . do you have a policy on sex education for the students of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I thank the member opposite for the question, a very specific question with regard to sex education in our school system.

The current system that we have is that Wellness 10 integrates health education with physical education. These are elective courses. In fact all of the courses are elective courses. Students investigate six components of wellness — physical activity, stress management, physical fitness, leisure, relationships, and healthy eating — and how these components relate directly to them as individuals.

We also have a Life Transitions 20 and 30, which again are elective courses that integrate health education, family life education, from home economics and career and student development. And I must also point out that the aim of Life Transitions is to enable students to plan and enhance their career development, family and community life, and personal health throughout their lives.

And one optional module in Life Transitions 30 does include an HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus) (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) education component as well.

We also have liaison committees at the local level. The department does develop in conjunction with these liaison committees the actual curriculum and program with regard to health education, and more specifically, sex education in our system. And it has been very well received by the communities. And we're actually very, very much in tune in keeping our health and sex education as up to date as possible. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, I know that your department approves the books that are recommended for reference material for students. And regarding Wellness 10, I imagine *The Wellness Workbook* by John Travis and Regina Sarah Ryan is a workbook that you are aware of.

I'm wondering if you've had this book or any sections of this book brought to your attention and if there's anything in this material that you would consider something that should be considered at least a little bit controversial.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — With regard to the specific question that the member opposite asked, the department has a protocol for actually reviewing all resource materials provided . . . or recommended to school divisions. A lot of educators will use resource materials that are not necessarily actually approved by the department because we believe in the independence of professionals in the classroom.

However, there is no way for myself or my officials to

determine whether the specific book she is referring to is on our recommended list or not.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, of course there would be a way for you to know it. That's your job to know what kind of books, reference material, is allowed by the teachers in this province because we're dealing with youngsters in this province.

Mr. Minister, this book that you . . . that is being used by some schools has been brought to my attention and has caused a lot of concern. And I will just read you a quote that was given to me. It says, quote:

I take exception to the fact that in grade 10, teachers are encouraged to teach 15- and 16-year-old children about sensuous sex and give them a test on questions.

And I'm not sure whether I even want to read you this, but I guess if I don't then you won't know what I'm talking about, quote:

I fully experience the many stages of lovemaking rather than focus only on orgasm.

These are the kind of test questions that are asked students in grade 10. And this material is from a book that is in use or given credibility by your department.

Now, Mr. Minister, will you remark on that, and then I will give you . . . ask you some more questions on this.

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — If the member opposite, if the member opposite would actually give us the name of the book, we could actually determine whether it's on the recommended list or not.

But just to remind the members opposite and to inform them, with regard to the number of resource materials that the department does scrutinize, there are literally tens of thousands of resource materials that are reviewed on an annual basis, and these recommendations are provided to school divisions.

But I must remind the members that the school divisions are also responsible in determining the recommended books and resource materials. We do not actually, through our curriculum, insist on the use of any of these resource materials. What we say is we provide them, and we do provide the recommended list.

With regard to the special question on sexual education, if you're providing sex education that is suitable for the age group and is appropriate, that these resource materials, I must remind the member, are reviewed by classroom teachers.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you said you scrutinized the material. You've made this material available for students in our province. And I can tell you that I checked the recommended bibliography at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and the book is indeed listed as one of the recommended materials that can be used.

And, Mr. Minister, don't blame it on the teachers. Don't blame

it on anybody. You and your department has to make sure that the material that is available for our students is something that the parents not only agree with, but something that maybe would include some of the issues that we have been talking about in this legislature.

One of the things that this book talks about is dealing in X-rated movies, reading erotic material aloud, and writing your own forms of letters. Now, Mr. Minister, is it not illegal to rent one of these X-rated movies until you're at least 18 years old? Is that something that your department is saying: it's okay if it's part of a school subject; you can rent it.

Mr. Minister, these X-rated movies are something that is suggested in this book of yours.

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I'll remind the member opposite that all of the resources utilized in classrooms in the province of Saskatchewan are reviewed by classroom teachers. And the process for review is 100 per cent endorsed by all of the stakeholders in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, are the parents whose children are involved in using this material, are they given copies of this? Do they know what their children are being taught?

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — I thank the member for the question.

With regard to the parents' input and the role of parents, obviously in our school system that we do support as much as possible the role of parents in determining what is taught in our classrooms.

The recommendation is that each school board and each school have what is known as a local liaison committee. The role of this committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is recommended to support the teacher and to facilitate coordinated planning. The committee structure and mandate will vary from one area to another, depending on the number of classrooms, the size of the community, health related programming in the community, and other factors.

It is recommended that responsibility for setting up the committee be considered by the local school board and assigned either to a trustee or a school administrator.

Now the functions of this committee are to provide support to the classroom and total school programming; provide liaison with health related programming in the community; provide a forum for discussion of parent-student health related issues and concerns.

And the membership of this committee should include the school principal; a school local trustee; a health professional, as well as a health promotion staff member of the local health district; a member of the clergy; a parent; a representative from a local youth club; a student representative from the representative student council; a representative from the business and professional community; an Indian or Metis representative; and others who have special contributions to make.

And these local liaison committees do represent their communities extremely well in determining the content within our health curriculum.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, who appoints the liaison committee?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — The liaison committee is selected by the local board.

Ms. Draude: — Is there a Chair, Mr. Minister? Does every school division have one of these liaison committees?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no way for us to know whether every school board has a local liaison committee. It is the recommendation of the department that they have these committees.

But I also will remind the member, or inform the member, that it is a requirement of the department that boards are required to have local procedures in place where parents can challenge the use of particular resource materials directly with their local school board.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, the material that is being used in the school system, do the students have . . . or do the parents have the opportunity to ask if their children should be in this, or are in this program? Do they have the opportunity to opt out?

(1230)

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly the department does recognize the importance of this issue that the member opposite has brought up. We also recognize the sensitivity with regard to this issue throughout the province of Saskatchewan. But the department has ensured that there are many mechanisms in place that — community and parental involvement — that these sensitivities can be brought forward and discussed.

And some of the procedures that I've mentioned are the review material process that we have in place that is endorsed by all the stakeholders. I've mentioned the liaison committee which we have asked all school boards to have in place. We also look at the fact that it is . . . that our parents and their children can opt out of these programs if they so desire. And also that groups of parents do have a process, through the local challenge process, to go to any school board and say that this particular material be withdrawn.

Those processes are in place and certainly we do encourage that the health curriculum does provide up-to-date information that is age appropriate, but also recognizes the sensitivity of this issue.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, right now our children have to opt out of this program. There should be a system where we can opt into the program, not opt out. Because as soon as this parent or child have to say that they're going to opt out of this, then right away then they are showing they are different and everybody knows that their parents are taking them of the program and it causes the children themselves a lot of concern.

Now why doesn't your department change the process around so that parents and children can opt in instead of having to opt out of this process?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Just to clarify for the member. The health program, the healthy living, the physical activity — all of those components are part of the recognized curriculum. But with regard to the sexual content — the HIV, AIDS portion of it — any parent or student cannot opt out of that part of the program. And school divisions can choose whether they would include that in part of their health curriculum as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, my question to you is are you considering making changes so that children can opt in instead of having to opt out of this program? If that was happening, then the parents would know what was happening. They'd have a chance to review the material and they would know what their children are being taught.

So again, Mr. Minister, I'm asking you, are you going to consider the opportunity for the children to have to opt in, instead of having to opt out so that they're indifferent?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Again just to clarify for the member opposite, the question with regard to opting in and opting out, we believe that the decisions on curriculum is best, obviously in this particular area, left to school divisions.

But to talk about . . . there's a dual process involved here. There is the opportunity to challenge by a group of parents whether the actual content with regard to sex education would be included in the health curriculum. So there is this process. And then the second process of course is if the community at large agrees that it should be included in the health curriculum, if the individual parent does not believe that their child should receive this education, then they have the opportunity to opt out.

So we have a sensitivity and a process that has checks and balances built into it, that allows for: one, a group challenge to have it not included in the curriculum to begin with; and secondly, if the community decides as a whole that it should be included, then there is the individual option to opt out.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, maybe you could explain this process to me. How does this review process actually work? From the parents I've been hearing from, there isn't . . . the process isn't something that is workable. So maybe give me the information that you have on it.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a process in place, and the department does require a local procedure be in place for challenges brought forward by a parent or parents to challenge any of the resource materials included in the curriculum. And that process must be heard by the board and it must be listened to.

And of course the decision by the board is the board's decision. And that is why we have independent school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, does this make any sense to you or to your department that the parent would have to go to the board and have their child taken out of

a program? Something like sex education or this type of curriculum activity that's going on, wouldn't it make more sense to have the parents or the child say I'd like to go into that program, rather than saying, I want to take them out and this is the reason why. Mr. Minister, we're talking about children and the sensitivities around sex education and some of the moralities that we're talking about in this province.

And the government across, in the last few days, has shown me that there isn't . . . I'm afraid there isn't the kind of sensitivities that we would like to see in this province. And we cannot, at the age of grade 10, see children being influenced by this kind of information.

I am well aware that there are a lot of parents don't even know what is happening to their children in the school system. You're going to say that this is their responsibility, but just a second ago you said we were leaving it up to the very capable hands of the school division trustees. What kind of responsibilities are you giving them over the responsibilities of the parents?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly the jurisdiction for the education of our students in the province of Saskatchewan rests with school divisions. School trustees, as have been the case since the beginning of this province, have been responsive and responsible to the communities that elect these trustees.

Certainly if a group of parents or a community has a particular problem with trustees, then they have the option of electing different trustees. That is part of responsible government.

But I must also point out to the member that she seems to be fixated on one particular area. But you should . . . must also recognize where communities have decided to not include sex education, HIV-AIDS education within their health curriculum, that groups of parents could come forward and also challenge that ruling to have it included. So it works both ways.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, there's not a fixation on any one area here. What we're trying to do, and what you should be doing as Minister of Education, is making sure that the children get a well-rounded education that includes the parents. Where the responsibility of some of these very important issues could be left with the parents and not with the school divisions themselves.

What is your Department of Education's idea of what the parents' role is compared to what the idea of what the school board's role is? Don't forget the school boards are elected and the parents themselves are the ones that have to take the children to school every day and know what . . . and worry about what the children are like at the end of the day.

Mr. Minister, what I'm asking you to do is to reconsider the way that you have this set up right now so that parents of children have more input in what's happening with their children in sex education in this province.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Certainly we're talking about a fairly specific area. And as I've outlined to the member opposite, that we do have several mechanisms in place so that the curriculum that is provided to students in the province of Saskatchewan is

up to date and is as current as possible, and also provides teachers with the resources that they require to teach the Saskatchewan curriculum which is internationally recognized as being one of the finest curriculums anywhere.

So certainly we do believe in the autonomy of school divisions to make decisions. We do believe in the process where all stakeholders participate in reviewing the resources available to classroom teachers and that the department will continue to support school divisions and classroom teachers.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister. Then within each school itself, then the teachers are the ones that are actually given the last say? The school division gives them some guidelines but each teacher in an individual school would make up their own mind on how they were going to bring forward this part of the curriculum?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly as I have explained to the member opposite, the process for curriculum development and endorsement, and we do recognize the value of our teachers. Our teachers are professionals. They live in the communities where they teach. They are often parents themselves and they are very sensitive to these specific issues. And I think that our classroom teachers as professionals do teach the Saskatchewan curriculum very well, but they also are sensitive to the needs of their community and the sensitivities within their communities.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, of course our teachers are very sensitive to it and we have very great teachers in this province. We're not talking about that. We're talking about what the parents' rights is, and the school boards and the teachers.

Mr. Minister, do the parents have a right to come into classes and sit through each and every one of these classes, if they would like to, to see what their children are being taught?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Certainly the member opposite does bring up a rather practical issue, recognizing that teachers are teaching a curriculum that could possibly have 25 or 30 children in a classroom — it may be less, may be more. But the reality is that the protocol is that parents who wish to participate or observe would make that recommendation directly to their school based administrators. And if arrangements could be made in a practical sense, then there is no reason why not that parents could not participate in the instruction components of some of these areas.

Ms. Draude: — So, Mr. Minister, then what you're saying is the parents have to let the teachers know ahead of time so that they can be prepared to bring . . . and come and sit. They can't just come into a class at any time. They have to let the teacher know before.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Well of course that's correct because you couldn't all of a sudden have, you know, 25 parents arrive in a classroom and saying we want to participate. Obviously there has to be some coordination. And that's why . . . the question really does deal with some very practical and very specific issues. My understanding is that school-based administrators and teachers are very receptive to their

communities and that parents may come and go. But they obviously need permission, otherwise it could be disruptive to the classroom and the education of our students.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, we recognize that that could be disruptive and that's not what the parents are asking for. I'm sure that parents that would be coming to this class would be coming because they have . . . they care very deeply and they're very concerned about what is being taught to their child.

So I think the questions that we're asking . . . I know the questions I'm asking are from parents that care and they want to ensure that when they would come in at any time, that the material their children are being given is something that isn't being screened or desensitized because they know that there's going to be somebody else there, somebody else watching.

Mr. Minister, I guess what I'm really asking you about with this whole issue is what do you think your department's role is in determining whether some of this material is appropriate for the students in our schools in Saskatchewan? Some of this material that I will send over and show you, there is some very graphic material here, not even as far . . . not that far removed from some of the other topics we were talking about earlier this week.

When we're talking about X-rated films that are illegal unless you're 18 years old, how can this type of material be approved by your department? Mr. Minister, do you have a review group that is looking at this material so we can ensure that there is nothing that gets into the classrooms that the parents don't have an opportunity to see at any time and that they would approve of?

(1245)

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you. With regard to the member opposite's most recent question, as itemized earlier, there is a rigorous process for screening all resource material that is included in the curriculum. But I must remind the member again that the teacher, as the professional in the classroom, does have the opportunity to look at that recommended bibliography and choose the resource materials that they will be recommending or utilizing in the instruction of the core curriculum.

The other thing to remind the member is that there is an extremely wide spectrum of what should and should not be included, whether it's health education, whether it's science, whether it's math, and that the process that we have in place where the classroom teachers actually do review all of the resource material that is recommended by the department.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, the material that . . . some of the material that I've looked at also talks about things like rape and personal impotency and that type of issue. And I know that there's more; from my research I've found that there's quite a lot of information that's available to these students, but it is usually picked out and given to them in one format by teachers and by . . . and I imagine it's mostly the teachers that would have the direct knowledge on this.

How many of these issues does your department give actual information on? Do you have books that are sent out to or available to the teachers on these issues? And do you keep track of how many different books on sex education and these issues are used by teachers in this province?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Deputy Chair, certainly when we look at the whole question of health education in the province of Saskatchewan, it's not just a focus on one particular component with regard to sex education.

And again to refer to some of the actual curriculum that is taught in wellness 10, it includes physical activity, stress management, physical fitness, leisure activities, relationships, and healthy eating, and how these components relate directly to them as individuals.

The health of our children are extremely important to us as a government and as educators in the province of Saskatchewan as well. And the process that we have in place does utilize all of the stakeholders in providing screening of the material that we teach in our health curriculum.

And as I've indicated, there is a process that does recognize the sensitivities of communities. And opportunities — if there are sensitivities where the boundaries have become intolerable for the community — that there are opportunities in several ways for them to go directly to their local board and have these issues dealt with.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, then if you screen the material, then I guess you are in agreement with it.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering: is there the same opportunities for different programs, like Teen-Aid, to come into the school as there is for the education system right now on the sex education? Or do they have to opt in to Teen-Aid rather than opt out like they do on the other program?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Again, Mr. Deputy Chair, the school boards are able to utilize any resource within their community. There's no restriction by the departments in the resources and that applies to health education, it applies to science education, it applies to math education.

They can invite public health nurses; they can invite professionals. It doesn't . . . there's no restriction by the department and in fact, obviously if the community and the board so desired to have representatives from Teen-Aid to come in and participate, there's no reason that that could not be included as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, what you're saying then is you have to opt into Teen-Aid but you have to opt out of sex education? Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — The health education curriculum in the province of Saskatchewan is comprehensive. It is age related, and it does provide for sensitivities within the community.

The question that the member has just posed is a bit of a misrepresentation. When we're talking about core curriculum

and curriculum on health education as I've identified, that is comprehensive, age related, and does recognize sensitivities, but must be separated from the ability to use resources. The professionals in the classroom do make those determinations themselves along the lines that have been developed with all the stakeholders within regards to the core curriculum.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, we have in this province one of the distressing statistics with the number of teenage pregnancies in the province increasing. So we have a sex education program in school that teaches children about sex, where they have no opportunity to get out of it unless they opt out, usually with parental consent needed. But on the other side, when we need Teen-Aid or something that talks about abstinence, that type of thing, they have to opt into that type of program.

Now when we start talking . . . looking at it, aren't you questioning whether what your department is doing is actually working, remembering that the number of teenage pregnancies is increasing, the fact that we are only talking about one side of the issue.

Haven't you been getting a lot of questions from parents in this province saying, is this Department of Education lacking in this area when we have one side of the picture, one side of the issue, promoted by the school board, promoted by, mostly by your department, because you are in charge of it all, and we don't see the other side without making parents feel like they're being some kind of a villain or they're being strange because they want their child to get Teen-Aid.

That way it is your responsibility to make sure that both sides of the issues is being seen. And again remembering, that one of the biggest problems that we have in this province is the fact that we have a lot of single parents and it is your responsibility to see if we can be dealing with this issue.

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — I'm having a little trouble understanding the logic of the member opposite. Earlier she has a line of questions that seems to criticize the teaching of sex education in the curriculum, and now she says that there's an increased incidence of teen pregnancies. Well you know, you can't have it both ways.

The fact of the matter is that the curriculum in health that deals with sex education talks about the problems related to sexually transmitted diseases. It talks about HIV and AIDS. It talks about health education with regard to healthy lifestyles. And what it does is it indicates clearly in the curriculum that abstinence is presented as the safest and most appropriate choice for school-age youths in the province of Saskatchewan. But they also recognize that all of the information provided with regard to sexual and reproductive health is extremely important in dealing with some of the misconceptions and misperceptions that always occur in communities around sexuality and the actual discussion with regard to sexual and reproductive health.

So school boards and school divisions make the determination based on the recommendations of the core curriculum that is completely endorsed by all the stakeholders.

Mr. Deputy Chair, certainly I think the actual bottom line in terms of sex education within the province of Saskatchewan is that all of the curriculum indicates that abstinence is presented as the safest and most appropriate choice.

The committee reported progress.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — I want to wish you all a very pleasant weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:58 p.m.