

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of my constituents who would like to see some improved cellular telephone coverage in their area. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the districts of Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, and Cudworth.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Cudworth as well as Bruno, and I believe there is signatures on this petition also from Middle Lake.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of citizens concerned about the high price of fuel. 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.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of St. Brieux, Brockington, Melfort, Gronlid, Prince Albert, and Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition in regards to the high price of fuel. And 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 the fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

And the petition is signed by people from Shaunavon, Waldeck, Swift Current, and Eatonia.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also stand today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the high cost of fuel, and 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.

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

And this is signed by citizens of Davidson and Saskatoon.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of people in Swift Current and area concerned about their hospital, and the prayer can be summarized as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist in the regeneration plan for the Swift Current Regional Hospital.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Waldeck, Aneroid, Mankota, and the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan regarding forced municipal amalgamation. 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 on municipalities in Saskatchewan.

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

And these petitions are signed from people in the Govan, Lajord, Riceton, Gray, the one person that's left in Lewvan — a number of different communities.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to read a petition to stop municipal reserve account confiscation:

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

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the people from Nipawin and Tisdale.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to reduce fuel tax by 10 cents a litre.

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures are from Regina, Emerald Park, Estevan, Saskatoon, and Athabasca.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition of citizens concerned of a lack of cellular service. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to ensure reliable cellular service to Watson and area by installing a cellular tower at Watson.

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

The petitioners are from Leroy and Watson.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise with a petition to present on behalf of the citizens concerned with cellular telephone coverage in the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the districts of Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, and Cudworth.

And the signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Cudworth.

I do so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with 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 individuals from Moose Jaw, Central Butte, and Crane Valley.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

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

To cause the government to ensure reliable cellular service in the areas of Watson, Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, Cudworth, Strasbourg, Duval, Govan, and Bulyea.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice of a written question. I give notice that on day no. 46 I shall ask the government the following question:

During the 1998-1999 fiscal year, what were the names of all the employees of Executive Council; and for each employee, what was their title and what were they paid during the fiscal year 1998-1999?

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I would give . . . also give notice that on day no. 46 I shall ask the government the following question:

During the 1999-2000 fiscal year, what were the names of all the employees of Executive Council; and for each employee, what was their title and what were they paid during fiscal year 1999-2000?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask your indulgence for an extended invitation of our guests at this particular point in time. We have four American senators — state senators — visiting our House today, and I would like to introduce them.

I would ask them to stand when I introduce them. They are seated currently behind the bar on the opposition side.

First we have Senator DiAnna Schimek who is from Nebraska and was first elected in 1988. She is currently serving on committees of Government, Military and Veterans' Affairs, of which she is the chairman, Business and Labour, Urban Affairs, and Committee on Committees.

Today we are having MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) . . . they are shadowing MLAs, and the MLA that Senator Schimek is shadowing is the member from Estevan.

Also we have Senator Rich Wardner with us from the state of North Dakota, from Dickinson, which is our neighbour directly to the south. He currently serves on the Finance and Taxation Committee, Government and Veteran Affairs, Correction and Revision of the Journal, and Administrative Rules, Higher Education, and Regulatory Reform Review.

Senator Wardner is a principal or is a principal — retired principal, I guess — in real life. He is currently shadowing the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

With today also is Senator Robert Drake from South Dakota. Served in the House as a senator from 1995 until the present. He has served on the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee plus the House Local Government Committee, on the Legislative Oversight Committee of the State Water Board;

served on the Senate Appropriations Committee and is currently the vice-chairman of that committee, and was appointed to the Midwestern Conference Canada Foreign Relations Committee, and appointed to the Agriculture Policy Task Force, also.

And he is currently shadowing our Agriculture critic, the member from Kindersley. And we understand that that is a difficult job to do.

We also have the state of Kansas, a 28-year member, Senator Paul Feleciano who is the ranking minority member in the Senate; served on the Financial Institution and Insurances, Arts and Cultural Resources Committees, Commerce, Information Technology, Judiciary, Transition Oversight, and the Ways and Means Committee.

And today he is shadowing our Health critic, the member from Melfort.

I would ask that all members welcome these US (United States) senators to our Assembly today — state senators. They will be here also tomorrow with the government members. We hope that they have an enjoyable and educational visit to our institution, and that they can learn about our processes just as we can learn about theirs. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government caucus it's my pleasure as well to extend a welcome to our guests from the United States. Myself and the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation had a chance to spend a delightful few hours with our guests yesterday in a more informal setting, and they are a great bunch.

We look forward, as a caucus, to having them on our side tomorrow so they can get some real education. And we don't know what happened today but anyway we also, on behalf of our caucus, want to extend our welcome to our guests from the United States.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My error, I missed one very, very important person sitting in the Speaker's gallery, Ms. Ilene Grossman who is the coordinator for the Midwestern Conference and without whose very competent work none of this would happen. Please welcome her to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to have an opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly, one of my very best friends, Mr. Barry Daku, who is sitting in the west gallery.

Barry is currently the plant manager for the new Armstrong Cheese factory in Saskatoon, a factory which has just recently received \$10,000 through the JobStart/Future Skills program to help fund staff training.

And Barry's done a tremendous job in building up this cheese factory, getting it functioning well. We're happy to have him here in this Assembly. Let's welcome him to this gathering.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you today the board members from Building a Nation in Saskatoon. They are sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are Glen McCallum, Cal Albright, George Laliberte, Tom Hengen, Maurice Bear of Peter Ballantyne First Nations.

Mr. Bear taught me my first Cree word this morning, Kis-is-ski-tche-wan, which means Saskatchewan. So I've got a little way to go here, but anyhow. These gentlemen represent the business community in Saskatoon and are to be commended for the outstanding job they are doing in their community.

And I'd like all members of the Assembly to help me welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the member in regards to introducing and acknowledging the Building a Nation group and Glen, Cal, Maurice, George, and Tom.

And I would say this, Mr. Speaker.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Mr. Speaker, it is great to see people building a nation and going forward and developing businesses, you know, from . . . people from northern Saskatchewan in co-operation with others.

So again, please welcome them, Mr. Speaker. Tuwaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker to you, and through you, to members of the House, I'd like to introduce four special people in the gallery today. They're four students from my constituency, Ken Radtke and Rachelle Marquette from Kelvington and Jennifer Zenner and Jaylene Mortenson from Macoun.

They are learning the ropes of being an MLA so after . . . during the next election they can win and become Saskatchewan government members when we're on that side of the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you today, a gentleman who joins us from Regina South: Mr. Bert Ottenson, is seated up in the Speaker's gallery. And next to him, if I'm not mistaken, it's the Deputy Speaker who I think we all know. But if you'd join with me at least in welcoming Bert Ottenson, it would be appreciated.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Member from Canora-Pelly Expresses Thanks

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it has been a long time since I had the pleasure to rise in this Assembly and be recognized as the member for Canora-Pelly. I want to begin by telling all of my colleagues, and to all the people of Saskatchewan, that I'm extremely honoured to be back, and probably a little relieved as well. I look forward to easing myself into the everyday workload of the Legislative Assembly and the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, while it has been only four and a half weeks since my surgery, I feel that my condition has improved to the point where I can be of assistance to my caucus and to the legislative process as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to express my thank you's this afternoon to so many people, and I know that I cannot mention everyone. I want to thank Dr. Dewar, Dr. Habib, and the entire medical team at the Regina General for the care I received throughout the last four months. I always believed that my surgery would go well and I want to thank everyone for your well-wishes, telephone calls, cards, and prayers.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to thank my family, Gail, Bryce, and Lindsay, and all of my other relatives for their support and kindness. It is great to come from a large family.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my gratitude to all MLAs on both sides of the House, to individual staff members of the legislature, and to friends from all parts of Saskatchewan. Your positive support was appreciated.

I am thrilled to be back, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the balance of this legislative session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Purple Ribbon Awareness Week

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would very much like to welcome the member back from Canora-Pelly, safe and sound.

Mr. Speaker, May 14 to 20 has been proclaimed Purple Ribbon Awareness Week. This week was proclaimed by the Saskatchewan Battered Women's Advocacy Network, a provincial group that looks at addressing the needs of abused women and children. The week commemorates women who are experiencing violence or who have died at the hands of their partners, and it encourages the public to act to eliminate violence.

The week begins on Mother's Day, a day when most families gather to celebrate. For some, however, their family is a dangerous place to be. Studies show that almost half of women in Canada feel unsafe when walking in their own neighbourhoods, yet women are more likely to experience violence from their partners than from a stranger.

The statistics are unacceptable. Violence in any form should not

be tolerated. That's why keeping communities safe is a priority for this government. Our work in government has addressed violence with a wide range of initiatives. There are educational programs for children, shelters and crisis centres for victims of violence, programs for batterers, and innovative legislation.

By working together as governments, families, communities and individuals, we can eliminate violence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Donation to Upgrade Ophthalmic Imaging System

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and tell you about the generosity of a constituent of mine from Humboldt, Mr. Ron Bell. Mr. Bell recently walked into the eye care centre at Saskatoon City Hospital and said he wanted to make a contribution. Well Dr. Ken Romanchuk, head of the centre, thought his prayers had been answered as two weeks prior to Mr. Bell's visit it was realized that the ophthalmic imaging system was starting to go.

Dr. Romanchuk was concerned that if the machine went down, people would not be able to be treated and they'd have to go out of the province to receive treatment. The machine is essential to the treatment of eye conditions resulting from diabetes-related problems, age-related macular degeneration, infections, inflammations, inherited diseases, and other conditions. And it takes digital images of a patient's eye and then the doctor uses those images as references while they treat the eye with lasers. About 2,000 people use the imaging system for treatment of their eye problems.

Well Ron Bell has donated enough money to cover a \$98,000 software upgrade to the imaging system. The system's camera is state of the art but the software was outdated. Mr. Bell is happy to know that the machine will be upgraded and it'll help many people. As he says in his own words, "I know very well what it's like to have eye trouble so I figured this was one way of helping out."

Our sincere thanks to you, Mr. Ron Bell. Your generosity will help many people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskJobs

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning an exciting new provincial Internet service for employers and job seekers alike called SaskJobs was announced.

I want to tell the Assembly this is a very important and innovative new idea that's coming to Saskatchewan. SaskJobs is the most comprehensive provincial system in Canada to provide job seekers and employers with online help with making the connection.

Employers can use SaskJobs to search for resumés of people looking for work and job seekers can use SaskJobs to advertise their resumés, search for jobs, and match their skills to current job openings. This new program, SaskJobs, is a new feature added to our post-secondary education web site.

I want to tell members that they can — members and all people in this province, I guess, particularly members opposite who may be in need of using this site more soon than some of the rest of us — that they can find this great site online at www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina hosts Grey Cup 2003

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to congratulate the Saskatchewan Roughriders, the city of Regina, and the province on being awarded the Grey Cup for 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the last time, which was the first time the Grey Cup was held in Regina was in 1995, and was a wonderful success and was dubbed one of the greatest festivities in the history of the Grey Cup.

Mr. Speaker, when it was announced that Regina would once again be hosting this auspicious occasion Rider pride welled up in everyone of us in Saskatchewan — another opportunity for the province to show what a great place this place is.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of the 2003 Grey Cup could not be better for members on this side of the House. As I'm sure you're well aware, Mr. Speaker, that the only two times the Riders have won the Grey Cup the NDP (New Democratic Party) was not the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that the Premier calls an election so the people of this province can accomplish two goals. First of all, voting out the NDP government with an eventual . . . and voting in an eventual Saskatchewan Party government. And second, Mr. Speaker, is that they can head over to Taylor Field and watch the Riders win their third Grey Cup on home turf and with the Saskatchewan Party government. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Social Housing

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the members of the Assembly and the public that the new provincial budget makes a very significant investment in social housing and other affordable housing initiatives — all this at a time when most provincial governments have slashed their housing budgets.

This year our government is increasing the budget for social housing by over \$6 million including a \$1.5 million budget item under Municipal Affairs and a commitment of \$5 million per year in each of the next four years through the Centenary Capital Fund.

Mr. Speaker, social housing in Canada used to be primarily funded by the Government of Canada under a formula in which Ottawa paid 75 per cent of construction costs, with the provinces paying 20 per cent and municipal governments 5 per

cent. In 1996, Ottawa unfortunately pulled all their funding for new construction, and social housing programs collapsed in most parts of Canada.

In this provincial budget, Mr. Speaker, our government is saying that good quality, affordable housing is a high priority and that we will develop social housing even if Ottawa doesn't help.

Social housing is a major vehicle for reducing poverty in our province. It's critical to the healthy development of children, and the well-being of families and communities. I'm delighted our province is playing a major leadership role in this area, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Southeast Regional College Graduations

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just to make a few comments about a couple of events I attended on the weekend. Friday night I had the privilege, with my wife, to attend the adult basic education grad in Moosomin, and then Saturday, the home care special care aid graduation. At the ABE grad in Moosomin, Mr. Speaker, there were 17 students with five graduates. At the special care aid graduation, there were 17 graduates.

Mr. Speaker, it shows us a couple of things. It shows us what the regional college network is doing for people across this province. It also gives people and individuals the opportunity to receive the required education and the tools that will be needed to help them to adjust and to plan to enter the workforce in the coming years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say hats off to each one of the graduates, to the staff for all their hard work and dedication, and certainly thank you to the regional college network of this province, of which Southeast Regional College is a member, for the opportunity they present to students across this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Call for By-election in Wood River

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this has got to be the most one-sided trade since the Lindros deal. Today the Saskatchewan Party member for Canora-Pelly returned to the legislature, and today we got rid of the Liberal member for Wood River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, in the next few weeks, the voters of Wood River will have a chance to pass judgment on your coalition government. I am confident that they want this opportunity soon.

Mr. Premier, will you call that by-election sooner rather than later? Will you hold a by-election in the Wood River riding before the end of June?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite that what we won't be doing is waiting 22 months, the way Grant Devine did in the Kindersley riding — 22 months. You remember that. The member opposite who replaces Grant Devine as leader of the right-wing party in this province — it's true they've changed their name from Progressive Conservative to Saskatchewan Party — but your party, while in government, waited in Kindersley 22 months to call a by-election; in Indian Head-Wolseley, 21 months; in Turtleford, 16 months; and in Eric Berntson's riding, 15 months to call a by-election.

What I can assure you is that it will be much sooner than your tradition in your party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the Premier . . . the Deputy Premier should recognize that in my tradition we've always called for by-elections as soon as possible, and I didn't hear him answer that he was going to call that by-election by the end of June. I would like him to reiterate that.

But it's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that he has a problem because this coalition government has been a complete failure. And the NDP, just like they did last time around, is going to get pounded in Wood River.

Mr. Speaker, before last year's election, we had eight years of NDP government — eight years of high taxes, failing health care, crumbling highways, and an agriculture in crisis.

Then eight months ago, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals bailed in with the NDP. And now what do we have? We have higher taxes, we have worse health care, we have worse highways, and there are no solutions for agriculture coming from this government.

Mr. Premier, it's no wonder that the member for Wood River abandoned your coalition government . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Hon. Leader of the Opposition has been quite lengthy in his preamble. Would you kindly go directly to the question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question to this government that is failing: Mr. Premier, will you call the Wood River by-election before the end of June?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I remember not that long ago during the last election when that member during a debate, in his bullying, aggressive way, was saying how he was going to be the next Premier. Well I can say, you're sitting on the opposition side and we're sitting on the government side and there will be a by-election.

Now going back to Kindersley, going back to the 22-month

wait in Kindersley, seeing the result of that change of MLAs, I can now understand why you would wait 22 months and maybe we should have waited longer.

But I want to say to the member opposite that the by-election in Wood River will come within the six-month legislative period and when it comes, I'm sure all of us will be there putting our platform forward.

And as I say, "Jobs up by 10,000 . . .", *Leader-Post*, May 6. Everything is going just fine. Be patient and the by-election will come quite soon enough.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to remind the Deputy Premier that while he may of, as a fluke, won more seats, the Saskatchewan Party won more votes, more support . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Wood River has already passed judgment on this coalition government. He says it's a failure and he has no intention of seeking re-election as a supporter of the NDP government. He said he will not betray the voters of Saskatchewan and the voters of Wood River. But, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that he thinks there are three other Liberals who have betrayed the voters — the Liberal leader, the member for North Battleford, and the member for Melville.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the Minister of Education as one of the signatories to the coalition agreement and a leader of this coalition government. Mr. Minister, the senior member of your caucus has now abandoned the coalition. He says . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The hon. member will remember that asking only executive government responsibilities of ministers, nothing related to their parties.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the leader — one of the leaders of the coalition government. Will you admit that your decision to join the NDP has been a complete failure?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the Leader of the Opposition Party speaking of Mr. McPherson who at one point sat with the New Democratic caucus, then with the Liberal caucus. I'm just wondering whether Yogi, Yogi who is up in the gallery, is worried about Mr. McPherson now coming over and running for a nomination for the Sask Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. I'd just like to remind hon. members not to engage members of the gallery in debate. And also to refer members by their constituency, not by their proper name.

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, they're getting

desperate over on the other side. Mr. Speaker, the people of Wood River have been really without an MLA for the past eight months. The Liberal member used to be an outspoken member of this Assembly, but ever since the Liberal leader sold out to the NDP he has been muzzled. The gag order is clearly in place.

Well this morning the member for Wood River spit out the gag. He slammed the coalition government and he slammed the Liberal caucus for being a party to this dirty deal. The member for Wood River said he sees no evidence that this government has even considered any part of the Liberal platform.

Mr. Minister, one-quarter of your caucus just walked out the door. He says the coalition is a complete failure. Will you withdraw, Mr. Minister of Education, from the coalition government?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting listening to the Leader of the Opposition who still hasn't got over his defeat in November in the last provincial election. He just can't accept it.

But what I would say to you, sir, is the next three and a half years — the next three and a half years — will go by relatively quickly. It'll go by relatively quickly and then we'll be back on the hustings again, and I think the results will be very similar to last time where the public of the province will see headlines like this: "Jobs up by 10,000."

And they will once again vote for the New Democratic Party whether it's in a coalition format or whether it's as the New Democratic Party and you will be relegated to being Leader of the Opposition. So don't be so impatient. The time will come — three and a half years goes by very, very quickly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Detox Centre For Saskatoon

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, the Riversdale and Pleasant Hill districts in Saskatoon are struggling with a major socio-economic problem. This problem involves the departments of Justice, Economics, Health, Social Services, and Aboriginal Affairs.

In these areas of Saskatoon, there is a major epidemic of alcohol abuse and extreme poverty as determined by the Saskatoon Health District, the Department of Social Services, and the Saskatoon City Police. Mr. Speaker, the Building a Nation organization is made up of Aboriginal and Metis members of the community of Saskatoon and they are deeply concerned about this problem.

The Building a Nation group and the Saskatoon agencies believe an emergent detox centre is necessary to respond to this epidemic to ease the stresses placed on the hospital emergency rooms, and the police and paramedics.

Mr. Premier, this is your constituency. What have you been doing to help the people in your riding deal with this problem and will you work with them to establish this detox centre?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me remind the member opposite, Mr. Speaker; that in terms of poverty, this province is the only province across this whole country to have seen a reduction in child poverty over the last year. That's the record of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — And, Mr. Speaker, that's not by following the policies of the party opposite; that's by following the parties of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, with regards to the detox centre, we are working on this question. We understand the issue. We are working on it with the other departments, and indeed, with the police service in Saskatoon. And we look forward, Mr. Speaker, to continuing to serve the people of Saskatoon in the most positive, constructive way we possibly can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, between April 1999 and March of this year, the Saskatoon police made over 2,000 arrests for public intoxication — over 2,000 arrests, specifically in the Riversdale and Pleasant Hill areas. What is more alarming is those 2,000 arrests involved just over 1,200 people.

According to Saskatoon police statistics, those people were arrested between 1 and 39 times. An emergent detox centre would keep these people out of a jail cell and out of the emergency room but could also involve follow-up treatment and counselling.

Mr. Premier, an emergent detox centre is needed in this area of Saskatoon as a start. But other long-term solutions are needed because alcoholism is just a symptom of the underlying problem of the abject poverty these people face.

What commitment will you offer from the provincial government to help these agencies and the people in your own constituency to build this detox centre and develop long-term programming to deal with this major problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me contrast the member opposite and her party opposite — their platform in the last election, Mr. Speaker — with the commitments that we have made, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House to deal with crime in our society.

Mr. Speaker, you know we've made the commitment of 200 new police officers. Mr. Speaker, we've got \$635,000 to crack down on violent and chronic young offenders. We've got Aboriginal policing agreements across the province. We've got three-quarters of a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, for serious crime units in Regina and Saskatoon.

What did the party opposite campaign on, Mr. Speaker? Zero for crime; no more money for dealing with crime, Mr. Speaker. That's their record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal community is very concerned with this problem in these areas of Saskatoon and they need some pertinent, specific, and meaningful answers.

A recent study conducted by the Canadian Council on Social Development, released in April, shows that Saskatoon has the highest number of native residents of all Canadian cities, and that 64.9 per cent of those residents live below the poverty line. So not only is there the health issue of alcoholism, but also the social and economic conditions that these people face.

Many of the health, social, and justice service providers in the area of Saskatoon have identified an issue of major concern here, Mr. Minister. The Aboriginal community wants to lead and they want to have legitimate involvement in the development and delivery of a solution which would include an emergent . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, please. The hon. member has been quite lengthy in her preamble, and I'd also like to remind hon. members to kindly direct their questions and comments through the Chair. Hon. member from Humboldt, kindly go directly to your question.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, will you ensure that the Aboriginal community plays a predominant role in the development and deliverance of a comprehensive treatment program to help deal with this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I live in this riding actually and I'm very pleased to talk about what we are doing in this riding, which is the core project as it's called on 20th Street.

It's taking an old grocery store, adding a recreational complex onto it to bring children off the street into this area where they can talk about education, health. Social Services will be there. We are now working the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Metis Urban Council, the city of Saskatoon, the Saskatoon District Health Board, and ourselves and our different departments.

This is an intersectoral approach to targeting youth at risk, and we are having the first partnership in Canada like this. We are very proud of this initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, let us deal directly with the topic at hand. We are talking about a social epidemic, an epidemic of alcoholism that needs attention now.

Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal community is standing up and saying it is time to face this issue head on. There is too much suffering in this area of Saskatoon among their people. They

have said, we are through with denial, and they are deserving tremendous credit for the leadership that they are showing and for the commitment they have to solving this problem.

They have ideas for developing job placement programs within Aboriginal businesses in Saskatoon. They want to be responsible for healing the chronic alcoholism and the accompanying health and social problems.

Mr. Minister . . . Madam Minister, this is a major social and economic problem in your own back yard, one that cannot be ignored . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Would the member kindly go directly to her question, please.

Ms. Julé: — Madam Minister, will you too face the issue and send the Building a Nation group back to Saskatoon today with your support and a commitment from your government to start dealing with this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk again about the partnership in this core project. The Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Metis Urban Council, the Aboriginal community is 100 per cent behind this initiative. It's an innovative approach to dealing with people at risk.

We're looking at the prevention of some of the major social and health problems in this area and with this partnership we can make a . . . certainly make a huge difference in the lives of people in this area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

District Health Boards

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Madam Minister, today is the deadline for all health districts to submit their 2000 budget plans for approval by the NDP government. And many health districts are being forced to plan for the closure of hospitals or other health facilities in order to meet the NDP-imposed master plan.

And to make matters worse, the NDP has ordered health boards to keep their plans secret until final decisions on the facility closures can be made. In other words, Madam Minister, you've placed a gag order on health boards so they don't have to tell their communities they are losing their health facilities until after the final decision is made.

Madam Minister, will you lift the NDP gag order so that health boards can tell their communities what their plans are about closures and how it's going to affect health care delivery in their community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting question. For weeks we heard the members opposite talk about

forced amalgamations. We were never interested in forced amalgamation. For two weeks the number one issue for the members opposite was that we were the pornographers on this side of the House. And now, Mr. Speaker, it's all about gag orders.

So what I will say again is that the health districts are submitting their plans to the Department of Health. Once we have had an opportunity to review all of the plans, we will either amend the plans, agree with the plans, or disagree with the plans. And the health districts will have an opportunity to continue the dialogue process with their citizens and with their stakeholders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister. Madam Minister, on Friday I tabled a letter from your deputy minister telling the boards what to do in terms of the gag order.

Today officials in the Saskatoon Health District are also complaining about your gag order. They say they want to discuss their 2000 plans with the public before any final decisions are made. Last week a board member from Regina Health District resigned because of the devastating effect of plans that are being put into place in that health district.

Today I have a letter from the South East Health District board of directors that, sent to you, expressing their concern about the gag order. And I quote:

We are very concerned by the specific instruction that the changes that we are incorporating into our health plan are not to be discussed with our public or with our staff until these changes have been reviewed and approved by the Saskatchewan Health.

Madam Minister, all of these districts are saying the same thing — they are under a gag order. Will you lift it today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was able to answer that question last week and I've also answered again this morning.

But I do want to say this to the member, Mr. Speaker. I just received a copy of the CIHI (Canadian Institute of Health Information) report and it's an indication of how well our health system is doing, not only in Saskatchewan and in the country. What I can report to all members is that when you look at a list of 16 major surgical categories, Saskatchewan ranks one or two amongst ten of those categories, Mr. Speaker. That's good news for the Saskatchewan health system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister.

Madam Minister, in their letter to you, the South East District goes on to say, that it's absolutely important that consultation

occur in a timely fashion. And I quote:

Consulting with the public and the staff, with them after the plan has been approved will simply confirm their suspicions that we are not really interested in a reasoned consultation process.

Madam Minister, if your plans are to close facilities across this province, if your plans are to close health care facilities that you promised communities they would have in 1993, if your plans are to close health facilities in Lanigan, Watrous, Wynyard, Imperial, and Cupar, why don't you say this in an open and honest way?

Madam Minister, will you table a list of the facilities that are being considered for closure as a result of this budget process, the day you get it which is today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, he asks the same question only louder, Mr. Speaker.

What I can report to the members, Mr. Speaker, is that in the last year we have 17 additional physicians practising in the province of Saskatchewan. That's good news.

Mr. Speaker, what I can report is that the number of CAT (computerized axial tomography) scans have increased to now 56,000 in the province of Saskatchewan.

And what I can also report, Mr. Speaker, is that we've had a doubling of the numbers of MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) and therefore access for the citizens of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, again to the minister. Madam Minister, you should clearly understand that this process you've initiated is very, very flawed. You had previous experience in the Department of Education. You know in that department there was a process when you went to initiate closures. There was complete and full discussion about a board's proposal to close a facility — a school — that had to happen beforehand. Consultations went on with the community. Consultations went on with the staff and the people affected and the students. There was widespread and important consultation that occurred before any closure was approved.

Madam Minister, why are you going through this convoluted process now in health care? Why won't you open the process up and table those communities that are going to have closures?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can report to the public is that our citizens make 4.7 million visits to a family physician each year, and we have 17 additional physicians in the province.

What I can report is that 29,000 people receive home care services, representing 1.750 million hours of service.

I can also say, Mr. Speaker, that there are 800,000 days of in-patient patient care in our hospitals. And I can also that there are 650,000 visits to emergency rooms in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our system is a fabulous system. It's the best system in the world. And, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is going to do everything it can to maintain and enhance publicly funded and publicly administered health care in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I think that it may be important for you to listen to the question. I didn't ask . . .

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

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has to listen to the question. I didn't ask for a statistical rendition about what's going on in health care in Saskatchewan. I asked for your commitment to table a list of the communities that are going to face closure. We've heard already from the Regina district health budget . . . will have devastating impact on health care. We've heard that Living Sky has budgeted to close three facilities; Regina Health District two more; the South East is concerned about the process.

Madam Minister, I don't really want to hear a statistical rendition of what's going on in health care. I want your commitment to table the list of communities that are facing closures of facilities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, today I had an opportunity to read an interesting article in *The Globe and Mail*. It's dated Monday, May 15. And, Mr. Speaker, I am going to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, the person who writes the article is a man by the name of Theodore Marmor who is a professor of public policy at Yale School of Management. And what he says about the statistical information, and I quote:

That's why the authority of the CIHI report is so important. It is both a voice to counterbalance vocal pressure groups with a stake in crisis talk, and a reliable source that every journalist covering medicare needs to master (Mr. Speaker).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queen Elizabeth Power Station Upgrading

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to announce a project that is good news for the environment, for the economy, in fact, Mr. Speaker, for all the people of Saskatchewan. I'm referring to SaskPower's plan to install improved technology to upgrade the Queen Elizabeth power station in Saskatoon.

This is an innovative project, Mr. Speaker. The upgrade will take the form of the installation of six new 25 megawatt gas turbines developed by Hitachi to be used in conjunction with the existing technology at the plant. This system will capture waste heat from the exhaust in order to produce steam which is then used in the existing steam turbines. This combined cycle process raises the efficiency of the plant to 45 per cent, allowing 215 megawatts of power to be produced from an amount of fuel which would otherwise only produce 150 megawatts.

The benefits of this improved technology are significant. First, the refitting of the Queen Elizabeth power station will increase the efficiency of the plant from 30 to 45 per cent. Second, the advanced technology will reduce levels of nitrogen oxide which improve air quality.

Third, over the long term, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 200,000 tonnes a year. To put that in perspective, Mr. Speaker, that equals the emissions from 30,000 vehicles in one year.

Fourth, and finally, the retrofits will increase the efficiency and capacity at the Queen Elizabeth power station. This will help meet Saskatchewan's future energy needs. It's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that this power station fills that role as it was commissioned in 1959 to meet the need for increasing electric power generation.

Now, over 40 years later, the plant continues to meet the province's future power requirements and much more.

This project also means jobs, Mr. Speaker — 140 person-years for construction, and 20 person-years relating to the assembly and maintenance of the gas turbines. That is good news for our growing economy. This project is developed by a consortium with Marubeni, Hitachi, and SNC Lavalin.

I want to congratulate the employees of Queen Elizabeth power station. Through their hard work and dedication they have played an integral role in keeping the lights on in Saskatchewan in the past, in the present, and I am confident, Mr. Speaker, well into the future.

Our power utility company must constantly search for new ways to add cost-effective power generation to the system and find new ways to better serve its customers and shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan.

This project, Mr. Speaker, is another economic initiative by SaskPower that will serve the needs of the people of this province very well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I guess in the province of Saskatchewan we've unfortunately developed the reputation over the years of being one of the major polluters in the country when it comes to our power sources. I think anything that tends to lessen that is something that we need to look at.

I think another thing that needs to be important is that we maintain the supplies of energy throughout this particular province. I'm a little disappointed that it's taken this government this long to go ahead and even start thinking in those particular areas.

There have been other cogeneration things that have had opportunity to be developed. This particular government has just avoided them. And the people at the back over there chuckle. Wind power, other cogenerations up at Melville, all those sorts of things — you can call them whatever you wish — are things that this government could have done and chose not to do, chose not to do.

They talk of jobs that are going to be produced in this particular area. There are a lot of other jobs, Mr. Speaker, things like wind generation, that the other ones would have gone ahead and produced.

Let's just bring to mind the pipeline that the deputy minister likes to talk about. That pipeline, Mr. Speaker, is a total waste of time, energy, effort, and money in this province. Had this particular government taken that \$114 million and put it into other cogeneration situations, this province's reputation of being a major polluter in the production of electricity would not be as great as it is right now.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we'll be wanting to look carefully at what the developments there are, and we would hope that this particular government takes a lot more initiative in the future in cogeneration projects, in projects that give this province the reputation that it should have and could have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 60 — The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 60, The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Bill No. 61 — The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 61, The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 62 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 62, The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory

Reform) Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 63 — The Legal Aid Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 63, The Legal Aid Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

(1430)

Bill No. 64 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 64, The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 65 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 65, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 66 — The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 66, The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, a point of order.

The Speaker: — Kindly briefly state your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a long-established rule in this Assembly that no exhibits are allowed to be used. I would like to point out that the Deputy Premier twice during question period was using an exhibit, and I would ask that he apologize and refrain from doing so.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, during question period I referred a number of times to a news clipping from *The Leader-Post* that talked about 10,000 new jobs in the province, and I think it's been a long-standing tradition to be able to use news clippings or letters from individuals.

And I'm sure when you check the record, you'll find that the headline in *The Leader-Post* that I was using, of 10,000 new jobs in the province, is very legitimate. And I think what the member opposite is more upset about is the fact that they have been unable to find one good reason to ask about jobs in the province because our record . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The hon. members will know that it is pertinent to refer to newspaper articles for notes but not to display them as exhibits. And I believe that was just more than using it as a reference. I would ask the hon. member to kindly apologize for using that as an exhibit.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize profusely for using the news clipping talking of the 10,000 new jobs, and I apologize for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 44 — The Insurance Premiums Tax Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Insurance Premiums Tax Amendment Act, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget introduced sweeping tax reform including a proposal to lower income taxes by \$440 million. And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, there were changes to the sales tax that were proposed, meaning a net tax cut of about \$260 million. The changes to the insurance premiums tax are made under that umbrella of tax reform.

This Bill increases the insurance premiums tax rate from 2 per cent to 3 per cent on life, accident, and sickness insurance, and from 3 percent to 4 per cent on all other insurance except for hail insurance, which shall remain at 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, every province in Canada has a tax on insurance premiums. This is a tax paid by insurance companies on the value of premiums written on policies of individuals or for property in Saskatchewan.

Increasing the insurance premium tax by one percentage point is one component of the government's overall reform of the personal tax system to improve fairness, simplicity, and competitiveness.

As you know, the Vicq committee recommended that the education and health tax base be expanded to include insurance premiums. We chose not to include insurance premiums in the education and health tax commonly referred to as the provincial sales tax or the PST, but instead we decided to increase the

insurance premiums tax assessed against insurance companies.

Mr. Speaker, the insurance premiums tax rate change will increase revenue by an estimated \$13.7 million in this budget year. If we had accepted the advice to increase the PST to include insurance premiums, that tax increase to consumers would have been \$40 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Insurance Premiums Tax Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no matter how you cut it, an increase in taxes is an increase in taxes. Now what it means to the consumer at the end of the day is that they have to dig into their pocket, dig a little deeper, and shell out a little more.

The Minister of Finance has been telling us about the benefits of his proposed budget and the tax reductions. And while the minister has indicated that rightly so they didn't put the full E&H (education and health) tax on insurance premiums, the facts are this piece of legislation expands the E&H tax, even though it's modestly, to insurance premiums. And what that means for consumers, Mr. Speaker, is that they have to dig into their pockets more, and it actually costs them more just on an ongoing basis just to provide for basic protections.

Mr. Speaker, the minister always likes to refer to the Vicq report and the recommendations from the Vicq committee. And the Vicq committee . . . it's true that the Vicq report did recommend a significant reduction in personal income tax, also did recommend an expansion of the sales tax. But at the same time one thing the Minister of Finance continues to neglect and fails to tell the people of this province is that the Vicq report also called for reduction of that tax. And he didn't . . . when he called for the expansion . . . he called for a reduction.

So the government went part way. The government expanded the tax. While it eliminated a few services that didn't put the tax on, it didn't reduce the tax. And the reason for that, Mr. Speaker, was because they didn't have the ability to cut the services and to make sure that they were . . . the funding they were providing as services was indeed going to meet the basic needs of the service rather than just throwing money into a pot and not really being accountable for where it's going.

Mr. Speaker, The Insurance Premiums Tax Amendment Act, 2000 I don't believe was really necessary. And I don't believe 1 per cent more would have made or broken this government, while all it does and all it says it to the people of Saskatchewan is that every time this Minister of Finance stands up we have to dig into our pockets. He's going to find another way to take a dollar out of our pockets. Take a dollar away from us and the ability that we have to provide for our basic family needs, or for the educational or recreational needs of our families, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate, it's unfortunate that this government hasn't learned from other governments across this country that have begun to reduce and are making real efforts; not only efforts but significant moves in reducing taxes in their

jurisdictions without expanding taxes.

And what we're saying here, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that while this government brags about reducing taxes it has actually expanded taxes and expanded the cost in many areas to consumers of the province of Saskatchewan.

So we find it, as an opposition caucus, we find it reprehensible . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member from Moosomin when members are debating across the floor.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We find it totally irresponsible to be going to the people of Saskatchewan on one hand promising the tax reductions, and on the other hand, increasing the costs of services and increasing taxes.

And for the member from Regina South, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what this party campaigned on, Mr. Speaker, was a campaign of reducing taxes in the province of Saskatchewan. Not reducing with one hand and taking from the other hand, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we had evidence and we checked all the evidence. We had the WEFA corporation had taken the time to review all the significant numbers, Mr. Speaker, and on three occasions basically said yes, you can meet your obligations to the people of Saskatchewan in your campaign budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, The Insurance Premiums Tax Amendment Act, 2000 we find . . . I don't believe is really necessary. I don't believe the Minister of Finance really had to go through with this. I don't believe that the people of Saskatchewan needed another tax burden.

Unfortunately it's before this Assembly and we will take the time to discuss it. We will take indeed, Mr. Speaker, take the time to significantly review this piece of legislation and the reasons as to whether it was necessary and we would like to debate it further at a future date.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 45 — The Fuel Tax Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Fuel Tax Act, 2000. New legislation is being introduced to address concerns raised by the Department of Justice for the need to more accurately describe the tax on fuel as a multi-stage tax.

In practice, Mr. Speaker, the fuel tax is pre-collected by the major oil companies and passed on to vendors and consumers. Although the new Act technically imposes a tax liability on each person who deals with fuel, the tax is recovered each time the fuel is sold to the next person in the distribution chain. In this way Mr. Speaker, the final consumer ultimately pays the tax, so it remains a constitutionally valid direct tax, which is what the province has the authority to do under the Canadian

Constitution.

One of the features of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to implement the changes announced in the March 29, 2000 budget concerning the taxation of propane. Specifically this change exempts all propane cylinder fills where the propane is dispensed into a cylinder that weighs 100 pounds or less.

Mr. Speaker, Finance officials have worked closely with the fuel industry and the other provinces in drafting this new Bill. In fact, it is the product of several of their suggestions as well as information obtained on the best practices for collecting fuel taxes by various jurisdictions, including some of the American states.

Mr. Speaker, all provinces, the federal government, and the fuel industry, entered into a memorandum of agreement two years ago to establish the Canadian fuel tax project. This project envisions a fuel tax collection environment where, one, all stakeholders communicate effectively and share ideas using consistent and clear terminology; two, all information is accurate, timely, accessible, and trackable; and three, common processes are used across jurisdictions providing for a flexible, simplified, efficient, and effective system for the administration of fuel taxes.

Through the partnerships formed under the Canadian fuel project, Mr. Speaker, several improvements are in process or have already been made to fuel tax administration in Canada. For example, a generic fuel tax reporting form has been developed; standard requirements for colouring tax-free fuel are being prepared; common fuel tax terminology is being worked on; and simplified fuel tax collection and remittance procedures are being put into place.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill encompasses many of the procedures developed through the Canadian fuel project and in effect, provides model legislation for this project. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is not designed to increase fuel taxes; in fact, there's the exemption that I've mentioned. Rather it's designed to increase the procedures for industry and government.

So it gives me great pleasure to introduce this new Bill which will provide greater accountability and simplified administration for the fuel industry and for government. So, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of an Act to introduce The Fuel Tax Act, 2000.

(1445)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to The Fuel Tax Act, 2000 that has just been presented on the floor of the Assembly and some of the arguments that the minister has given us in regards to that Act.

As I was listening to the minister make his presentation, it seems to me part of the argument was simplifying some of the process, making sure that the Act fell well within the guidelines of what the . . . tax exemptions that were raised under the current . . . or the current budget would certainly be followed.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about fuel taxes, and I know people across this province and certainly our caucus has been well

aware of the fact that the public in general have two views of the tax on fuel. One of the views is that when it comes to road maintenance and repair in this province that every taxable . . . or every dollar raised through taxes should go towards the construction, maintenance of roads to upgrade this crumbling highway system in the province of Saskatchewan.

The other thing that people have been asking for as well, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the minister has not been using all those taxes that he's deriving from fuel taxes for the road system, that consumers in light of the increases that we've seen in the price of fuel should actually see some of that tax being refunded to help bring the price of fuel closer to what would be more . . . seen as a more reasonable figure.

Now the minister talked about and I believe he mentioned something about coloured fuels, certainly we have other provinces where they've got a reduction especially in the area for farm fuels; non-taxable fuels are coloured such as gasoline would . . . on the farm would be delivered as purple gas to show that it is a non-taxable fuel.

Mr. Speaker, I think this piece of legislation needs some review as to its specific purpose and the reason for it being before the Assembly. Therefore at this time, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 46 — The Tobacco Tax
Amendment Act, 2000**

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2000. On February 24 of this year, the Canadian Cancer Society made a presentation to the all-party Special Committee on Tobacco Control established by the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. As part of their presentation, they urged the government to equalize the tax rate on roll-your-own cigarettes with the tax rate on manufactured cigarettes.

Mr. Speaker, our government is on a steady course of tax reduction. However, we fully support the Canadian Cancer Society's objective of reducing the use of tobacco, especially among young people, and we are committed to do what we can in this respect.

This Bill responds in part to the recommendation of the Canadian Cancer Society by increasing the tax on every gram of tobacco, other than cigarettes, tobacco sticks or cigars, from 5.7 cents per gram to 7.7 cents per gram effective March 30, 2000. This change, Mr. Speaker, brings the tax rate on tobacco products sold in grams more closely in line with the tax on manufactured cigarettes.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, this Bill establishes a minimum tax on cigars of 35 cents per cigar. This change addresses some of the inconsistencies among wholesalers in how they have been calculating and pre-collecting the tax on cigars, particularly on lower-priced cigars. Other provinces, Mr. Speaker, are also examining ways to change the tax structure on cigars to reduce competitive inequities.

The changes contained within this Bill, Mr. Speaker, are

expected to raise an additional \$6.3 million in tobacco tax revenue in the current fiscal year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Tobacco Tax Act, 1998.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2000 that's just been presented to us, this is one piece of legislation that I think, other than a handful of colleagues on this side of the House, most of us would certainly be in support of.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a long-going debate in regards to the tax on tobacco and we've got . . . I believe the minister talked about something like \$6.3 million increases in revenues as a result of the tax. And I would have a feeling that rather than seeing an increase in revenues, I think the objective — and certainly what my constituents are telling me and my colleagues are saying they're hearing — people would like to see fewer people smoking and actually smoking a lot less, which would mean a decrease in revenue on one hand.

But on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, I think what it does is then we would hopefully see a reduction in the cost of the health services that are needed as a result of the problems affiliated with smoking in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation really is just a follow-up to the budget that the minister has presented and certainly bringing into line the tax increases that were in the budget. And this is an area that I really don't have a lot of difficulty in supporting the minister in regards to this piece of legislation.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be so bold as to say we can let this one roll ahead into committee.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 27

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 27 — The Certified Management Accountants Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed . . . I'm pleased to be able to speak to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 27, The Certified Management Accountants Act. As I looked at the Bill, and as the minister said when he introduced the Bill, this is a wholesale rewriting of the governing structure of the management accountants Act. This Bill was first written back in 1978 and it probably is time for it to be looked at, to be renewed, to be updated, and all those sorts of things.

As the minister also mentioned in his remarks when he introduced second reading of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, he said that this is a series of Acts that are being updated by his government and they have moved . . . done such things with regards to other professions such a dentistry, professional engineers, and

psychologists.

I believe it was in last session that the government introduced a Bill dealing with the professional engineering association or society. And I noted with interest that the Minister of Highways today had to introduce an amendment to The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, 2000. I understand that there has been some problems with that new Act that was passed in previous session and now there is a need to amend it.

Our caucus has met with some of the groups involved with that particular problem and we are certainly concerned that this Bill doesn't create more problems than it solves. While at first blush and first inspection of the Bill, it seems to be fairly straightforward, it seems fairly non-controversial, we certainly will want to take our time and have it reviewed; and give ourselves more time to review it, to send it out to other groups and organizations that could may be affected by the Bill. And we will be doing that.

As I had mentioned there has been problems with other Bills that were passed or introduced by this government and passed with other professional organizations. And so I will . . . as I will state again, we will be taking our time in reviewing it.

There are other organizations such as management accountants, the chartered accountants, and other professional organizations that may have some concerns with the Bill as well as the general public. So therefore I think we will take our time.

And one of the reasons why there can be conflicts, Mr. Speaker, is because various groups within a profession have different training, have different work experiences, have different apprenticeship programs. And are more . . . some groups such as the chartered accountants are perhaps more qualified to do . . . to work in various . . . in certain areas and other organizations or other groups of individuals who have somewhat less training and experience may not have the necessary tools to deal with some of the more complicated areas and decisions that need to be made. And therefore it is . . . I think it is critical and it's very important that due process takes place.

As we have seen in the past that when this government says that there is nothing controversial or contentious in a Bill, in fact history does not bear that statement to be true. So there has been times where . . . when a seemingly non-controversial and straightforward Bill had some portions of it that were in fact controversial and did create a lot of conflict. And so as I have said, we will want to make very sure that this in fact is not the case in this particular Bill.

I notice that some of the provisions within the Bill deal with setting up councils and the power of the council, and it deals with revisions as to who is a member . . . who can become a member of the association and who can't.

There is also a provision in the Bill which grants immunity to members of council if they do their job in good faith. And I find it somewhat ironic that — although I don't necessarily disagree with that provision that — but I do find it somewhat ironic that that provision is in the Bill when I think of the fact that my colleague, the member from Swift Current, introduced a private

members' Bill to protect firefighters who go out and attend fires outside their area and members opposite failed to support that initiative. And I'm not sure how they justify, in this case, that this council be immune from legal action and so forth and not support the initiative put forward by my colleague from Swift Current.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think at this time, until we have had an opportunity to, as I had said earlier, to talk to the various stakeholders and interest groups and to see how the powers and the boundaries that affect each professional organization and how they would interact and so on, I think until we have ample opportunity to hear back from these people, I think I would now have to move adjournment of this debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 32

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 32 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had an opportunity to look at the amendments as proposed under The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2000 and I'd like to make a couple of comments, if I could, on the basis of that summary.

When I looked at the Bill I think there was some very obvious positives to this Bill and I'd like to just highlight the things that I think we could agree on. And then there's some real concerns that I'd like to highlight as well before we allow this Bill to move further.

One of the things that I've noticed is that unlike other mandated pension plans, this one appears to be fully funded and in fact is running at a considerable service . . . surplus rather.

(1500)

This particular pension plan, it covers not only municipal employees but is also used pretty extensively in other urban and municipal areas — for instance, school divisions, regional colleges, libraries, and I understand that some of the police and firefighters are also using this particular pension plan. And in fact overall there's about 9,000 active and deferred members in this plan. That is a very good figure and it's very encouraging to see that.

Under this pension plan, from my review, I've found that about \$22 million is actually used annually as benefits out of this plan. So the point, I guess, Mr. Speaker, is that this plan is actually doing pretty well and I like to see that.

The problem is though, as has been highlighted by the minister presenting this Bill, is that it is operating too well. The surplus in fact, Mr. Speaker, has created something of a problem with the federal Income Tax Act in that you can only have a certain surplus in a pension fund and I think one of the problems that this

particular pension fund is having is that to get the cap down on this pension plan to comply with the federal Income Tax Act.

Well how best to go about doing that? It would seem to me that you would try and direct the surplus back to the employees in some particular fashion. Now the reason that this surplus has been generated, has probably for the same reasons we've been able to generate surpluses in other pension plans and in other savings accounts. And that of course is the ability of our economic times to generate those kinds of returns.

Those things, Mr. Speaker, certainly bode well for our particular times right now. And I would be very disappointed if savings funds and particular pension funds, like we're talking about here, have not had the opportunity to grow at a rather high rate, if not certainly high satisfactory rate.

I guess the problem is, in this particular Act, in trying to eliminate some of the surplus and get it back down to an acceptable level, acceptable to the federal Income Tax Act.

But changes will be made. And once changes are made we're talking on a fairly permanent basis. Once these changes are made it's very hard to readjust again.

And we know that the economy is not going to boom at 4 per cent as they're predicting federally. I think this government is confident predicting only 2 per cent, but still that's an increase in economic activity. What happens when that activity has not . . . will not be sustained? What happens when the interest rates start to drop as we're starting to get indications now, particularly if we're trying to follow the United States interest rate? I can see particular problems there.

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, when we run up these kind of large deficits, I want to make sure that the government in discussing these particular amendments do not get themselves trapped into a position where not only are we going to have a problem of surplus, but we might get into a problem where we're going to struggle with trying to maintain the pension plan with these changes.

So I think it's very critical that we look at those particular items when we're in a downturn market, as I'm sure that that is going to happen in a normal cycle of give and take in our economic activity.

The other problem that I have with this particular amendment, Mr. Speaker, would be if the potential costs to the employers have in fact been taken into account. From the records and the debate that we've had and what I've seen so far, this government has a real tendency to download a considerable amount of the debt load that the province may or may not want to hold itself. They downloaded that debt load onto provincial . . . from provincial to municipal government whether it's education or municipal.

With that increased debt load that is being downloaded onto these governments, are these governments, in fact, going to be able to handle the extra costs that they might run into in the future when the economy isn't going nearly as well.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that consultation has been taken

very extensively not only with the employers of the municipal governments, the school boards and so on, with the, both the police and firefighters, but also consultation with the employees that have a very vested stake in this particular pension fund.

So those are a couple of my main concerns. If we're going to . . . if the added costs to the employers in a downturn is going to increase the costs of municipal government generally, I think we have to be very cognizant of that when we're putting these amendments in place.

Another concern that I have, Mr. Speaker, is that as we move into the debate and continue to debate on expanded regional municipal districts, I'm wondering if enough thought process and consultation has gone into the effect of things like this particular pension plan, and how it's going to be affected when the . . . if and when the municipal realignments take place.

I think the amalgamation, whether they're forced, voluntary, or put in place as models and built from that, there is going to be an offsetting consequence to the employees in those municipalities. And I know once you get into a larger municipal environment with a lot more employees, costs generally increase. And in fact, the unions seem to be able to move in in those situations instead of several small employers become a larger employer. And with some of the debate that we've been experiencing recently, and will continue to hear in this Chamber, about forced unionization that has a real concern to me when we get into the consideration of the larger regional municipal districts.

So I guess for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very appropriate that legislation be put in place to try to look after the things that have to be looked after, and that of course is the surplus — moving it down so that it's compliant with the federal income tax. That's very positive. And I think to give the employees an earlier pension option at an earlier date or improve the benefits of the pension plan. All of those things are positive and quite supportive.

And I think that we would, when we get into committee and working through point by point, I think we can probably put our concerns forward, and hopefully they'll be addressed.

But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we move to Bill No. 231, The Fire-fighter Protection from Liability Act.

The division bells rang from 3:10 p.m. until 3:20 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 22

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
McMorris	Weekes	Brkich
Harpauer	Wakefield	Wiberg
Hart		

Nays — 26

Trew	Hagel	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Lingenfelter	Melenchuk
Cline	Atkinson	Goulet
Thomson	Lorje	Serby
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Prebble
Jones	Higgins	Yates
Harper	Axworthy	Junor
Kasperski	Wartman	

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 32 — The Municipal Employees' Pension
Amendment Act, 2000
(continued)**

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is one of those pension plans, that, Mr. Speaker, that the government has decided to totally revamp and present some new legislation on. This particular piece of legislation . . . this particular pension plan, Mr. Speaker, is a fully-funded plan, and as my colleague from Lloydminster was indicating, this is a pension plan that actually had a surplus to the needs of the present-time employees.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill moves towards dealing with that particular issue because of the tax implications from the federal government. I'm not exactly sure, Mr. Speaker, how they are planning on doing this, but one of the things that they should be looking at doing is reducing the cost to the members of the pension plan, reducing the cost of employees' . . . employers' costs for this pension plan, Mr. Speaker. It's always beneficial to an employee when there is fewer costs to them that their take-home pay is enhanced, that they can better afford to live in Saskatchewan.

We know that Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is a high tax regime and it does cost a considerable amount of money to live here because of that taxes. And it affects all sectors, Mr. Speaker, of society when we have a high tax regime.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard much debate in this House about amalgamations of municipalities, both rural and urban. That will have . . . If that happens, Mr. Speaker, either on a voluntary basis, as the municipalities themselves who wish to have it happen, or as the government has been seemingly indicating on a — as they called it — directive, directed consultation that forced amalgamation, Mr. Speaker, it will have an impact on the municipal pension plans of the employees that are involved, Mr. Speaker, by expanding that pool of employees or by reducing that pool.

A reduction of the pool, Mr. Speaker, of members in the pension plan may very well . . . (inaudible) . . . that surplus will actually have increased rather than decreased, depending on whether or not, Mr. Speaker, the members can transport their pensions to some other location to their next place of employment.

Those are some of the issues, Mr. Speaker, that need to be investigated further. Therefore at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 18 — The Public Employees Pension Plan
Amendment Act, 2000**

The Chair: — Before I call Clause 1, I'll invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his official or officials. I see one.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me Mr. Brian Smith who is the executive director of the Public Employees Benefits Agency.

Clause 1

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and welcome, Mr. Smith. I just have a couple of questions if I could, Mr. Minister.

Some of the questions that I'd like to start out with: can you give me an idea of the size, the relative size of this pension plan, relative to other provincial government pension plans that we have?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. This pension plan, that is the Public Employees Pension Plan, has 34,671 members. And it has account balances totalling \$2.17 billion and 98 participating employers. And this is the largest defined contribution plan in Canada.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could, I'll continue with some questioning. I think I understood you correctly at \$2.17 million? Billion dollars, sorry.

In terms of its actuarial outlook, can you give me an idea of how this is going to play out over the long-term of this pension plan in terms of liabilities, contributions? I guess my understanding is that there's an increasing number of participants in this as we go along. And is this, long-term, is this going to create a problem? Is it going to be compensated for already?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. It doesn't really matter how large this plan becomes or how many members are part of it because it is a defined contribution plan and so there's no defined benefit.

The difference being that the old plans that applied to employees who joined the public service, generally speaking before 1980, I think, were defined benefit plans and it didn't matter if you had the money to pay the benefits or not.

This is the new plan for the public service that was brought in approximately 1980. And this is a defined-contribution plan, and that means that the amount of money that is paid into the plan is defined.

(1530)

The employee and the government as employer — or the participating employer — pay that money in each and every

month. And at the end of the day when the employee retires, the amount of money that is there is taken and it is dealt with in the way that the employee wants it to be dealt with — such as investment, you know, an annuity for want of a better word right now, or something like that. And the benefit that the employee will get will be equivalent to what that pool of funds that has been contributed will earn.

And so to make a long story shorter, there is no unfunded liability in this plan. And there is no way that an unfunded liability could occur because the liabilities are met each and every month as the employer and the employee pay money into the plan on behalf of the contributing member of the plan.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was going to ask if any part of this was unfunded, but I think you've answered that. Some of the other pension plans that are in place are in fact unfunded, and I would hate to see it move into a direction, including this one, moving into those same kind of directions.

The 2.17 billion that you mentioned earlier, as a secondary question to that first comment, has that . . . what kind of assets is that kind of money involved in, or is in fact the 2.17 billion the assets . . . including the assets of the plan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. The assets of course would be invested in various forms of investment. And I can tell the member, Mr. Chair, that basically 25 per cent is invested in Canadian equities, 15 per cent is invested in United States equities, 15 per cent is invested in equities outside of North America. So that's 25 and 15 and 15 which is a total of 55 per cent. Three per cent is invested in real estate; 40 per cent is invested in Canadian bonds, 40; 2 per cent is in short-term investments — for a total of 45 per cent and that totals the 100 per cent.

So some of it is invested in Canadian equities, some in United States equities, some in equities outside North America, a bit in real estate, 40 per cent in Canadian bonds, and then 2 per cent in short-term investments.

So I think it's fair to say it's a diversified portfolio, no doubt determined by our own people at PEBA (Public Employees Benefit Agency) in consultation with investment bankers and advisors that they deal with and that they . . . that who do some work on their behalf.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair. Indeed it sounds like a very diverse portfolio and I think that's very credible. The . . . as those kinds of investments over the past little while have been performing very well. We were just talking a bit earlier about the municipal employees' pension fund and that that has gone so well that there is a bit of a separate problem that has to be dealt with.

Have these funds generally been performing at that rate, at the rate that normally you would expect those kinds of funds to, if these were in RRSPs (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) or some other kind of mutual fund investments?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that this fund has actually performed very well. For example, for the

period ending March 31st, 2000, which would be the last year, the fund will have returned 15 per cent, that's one five per cent, which under current circumstances is quite good. And certainly that's true of previous years as well.

This fund and the management of the fund and . . . I should have said earlier, by the way, it started October 1, 1977. I had said 1980; I wasn't aware that it actually started as early as 1977. But in any event, the fund has, yes, done very well. And I think it's fair to say that the fund generally speaking exceeds what one would expect to do in the private sector in terms of management.

I can tell the member that any of us I think would be quite happy in our personal affairs if our own portfolios had grown in the way that this fund seems to have grown for quite a long time.

And we're very fortunate in Saskatchewan to have the public servants we've had at the Public Employees Benefit Agency who have done a very good job, and also to have some of the private sector investment managers that we have that work with us. The plan seems to be able to outperform most other investment funds year after year so we're very fortunate in that regard.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are we going to be running into the same kind of problem here that we did with the municipal employees pension fund where it performed so well that we got outside of the limit that's set by the federal Income Tax Act?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, Mr. Chair, we will not run into that problem, and the answer is sort of the flip side of the unfunded liability issue. You can't have an unfunded liability in this fund because it's a defined contribution plan, and all of the money necessary to give the member or retiree the money they're entitled to will simply be their fund.

And by the same token, you can't have any excess surplus because all of the money that is accumulated belongs to the members. So that after you pay for the administration of the fund, that money will go to each individual member according to their contributions and then the matching contributions of the employer.

So, no, you don't run into the unfunded liability problem and you don't run into the, you know, the accumulation of the surplus problem. And the reason for that is simply that the province in the late '70s, early '80s made the very good and wise choice to go into all the new plans that I think we all know about — out of the defined benefit into the defined contribution.

As a result of that, we're avoiding the problems in these plans which is certainly gratifying to me as Finance minister, but I think it's also gratifying to the members opposite and all the people of the province. So we won't have the problem with surplus contributions accumulating and we won't have the problem with unfunded liability.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, maybe I should know this, but could you explain to me or describe a little about — not the advisers because you've talked

a little bit about the people advising how these funds should be manipulated — could you explain to me who is responsible ultimately for the administration? Who is on . . . is there a recognized committee or a board and who is it made up of?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question is that under section 3 of the legislation, there is a supervisory board of the Public Employees Superannuation Plan continued as the Public Employees Pension Board.

It consists of seven members appointed by the provincial cabinet, but three members must represent employees. And of course the employees are consulted about who their representatives should be. Three members represent participating employers, of which there are 98. And of course the employers likewise would be consulted. And then a person is nominated by the Minister of Finance to be the Chairperson, and that happens to be Mr. Smith who's here today and who's the executive director of the Public Employees' Benefits Agency.

So there's seven members, chaired by Mr. Smith — three from the employees and three from the employer — and they administer the plan.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, how many of the current members are actually drawing from the fund? And do you project this to increase significantly over the next little while?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair. As I indicated earlier, there are about 34,600 people in the plan now. The number of people who . . . The member asked, I believe, if I heard the question correctly, how many people would be drawing benefits from the plan.

And the reason for my delay in responding is that it isn't normally the case that members will draw benefits from the plan. Normally what will happen is that they will reach their retirement age, they will simply take their money, and then they will buy an annuity from a life insurance company or another financial institution.

And then the relationship between that person and the plan is then severed, and the plan doesn't keep track of whether they're still getting their annuity or whether they're still living even, because they don't have any ongoing relationship.

But I can tell the member that since the plan's inception, I mean there would have been thousands of people that would have retired, taken their money, invested it in annuities; and there would likewise be thousands of people who would be receiving annuities under the plan, the exact number not kept track of by the plan because it doesn't quite work that way. And then of course some of the employees would have passed away subsequent to their retirement.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I noticed, Mr. Chair, I noticed as well that one of the provisions is allowing for retirement age reduced from 55 down to 50. And I'm sure you've done a lot of numbers to try to project what kind of a consequence that would have on this particular pension plan.

So could you just briefly give me an indication of how you anticipate the reduction from 55 down to 50 — retirement age — how that will affect the plan in terms of its assets, and how many more people will come onto the roll in that case?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We don't anticipate, Mr. Chair, that that change will have a great impact on the plan in the sense that because it's a defined contribution plan, whether the member retires at 50 or 55, it won't make any difference to the financial health of the plan in the sense that the only money that the member takes when they retire is their own money which they've accumulated as a result of their contributions and the matching employer contributions.

So that since it isn't a defined benefit plan they simply take what they're entitled to. I suppose one could speculate that if you had people retiring early that perhaps you then have fewer employees in the plan. But that would only be the case if you did not replace the employees that were retiring.

And since in the absence of some other decision we can assume that if some employees retire early perhaps some younger people or new people will come into the public service. They would presumably . . . well they would then be part of the plan. And so it doesn't really have any either advantageous or detrimental effect on the plan. It is advantageous from the point of view of the employees because it gives them greater flexibility to retire.

From the point of view of the plan, whether they retire at 50 or 51 or 55 or indeed 60 or 65, I don't think it makes a great deal of difference one way or the other in terms of the health of the plan for the reasons I've indicated. And it primarily is designed to give the employees more flexibility. It's not designed to benefit the government or the plan or to cost the plan anything. It's simply to say to the employees that if they wish to retire at age 50 they can do so.

But of course I should add that the benefit that they would receive from the plan would then be less because their contributions would be smaller; they would then buy a smaller pension. Perhaps in some cases some people retire in their early 50s but they go on to another career, or they might work part-time, or they might be on the farm or something like that.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, I understand that talking about the people that might want to retire a bit earlier, they have an option in this plan, I understand, that they can contribute voluntarily into this plan. How much of the plan is . . . has contained voluntary contributions? And is there . . . now the provision will be to allow them to withdraw that. Is that going to cause any undo concern with the fund that it's . . .

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The provision, Mr. Chair, to allow the withdraw of voluntary contributions will only apply to voluntary contributions that are made after January 1 of next year. So that any voluntary contributions that have been made up to the present time, and indeed until the duration of this year, are locked in.

Next year if you make a voluntary contribution, as opposed to

what the employer and the employee have to pay in, you can take that out. But we don't have any such contributions yet. So what we will do is as of next year start tracking the voluntary contributions that have been made, the amount of those, and yes, people can withdraw those.

Once again, I don't think it would affect the health of the plan one way or the other for the reasons I've indicated before that it simply is an individual account of the plan member. And if they make voluntary contributions, that will increase the asset that they have on retirement. If they withdraw that, it will decrease their asset, but it will not either increase or decrease the liability of the taxpayers or employers. It will simply be in effect a savings account of each employee which they can add to or they can take away from with respect to future contributions.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, on that particular, the issue of the age — the 55 down to 50 and then maybe in the future voluntary contributions can be withdrawn — do you think people will . . . is this a way to reduce or give an incentive for people to move out of the public service? Is it a way — rather than layoffs — is it a way to encourage them to leave?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chairman, I would have to answer the question no. It doesn't provide any incentive for people to early retire in the sense that they don't get anything in addition to what they would otherwise be entitled to.

I think it's fair to say that it gives them the flexibility to retire early, but it doesn't really give them anything extra or anything that they otherwise would not be entitled to. If they stayed on they would maintain the contributions that they had made that were mandated plus their voluntary contributions. They don't really gain any incentive financially to early retire.

Their incentives would be for other reasons: that they want to retire, they want to be at home, they want to do something else. And so in that sense they have flexibility, but we don't really provide any financial incentive.

And I guess that could be contrasted with other plans that there have been from time to time whereby government or a Crown corporation have given people actually something extra for them to retire because they want to downsize the corporation or the government. That isn't the case here. There's nothing being given to people to encourage them to go. It's only if they voluntarily or individually have already decided that that's what they would like to do.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair. Is this pension plan — maybe I should know this — is this public employees and pension plan, is it transferable from one province to another? I'm thinking that when a person wants to relocate out of the province, quite often we're seeing people actually relocating out of the province and I would assume that would include civil service as well. So is it transferable both ways? Is it transferable out and are other pension plans transferable into this province?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, this is transferable. In order to transfer there has to be a reciprocal arrangement with another province. But since January 1, 1997, the Public Employees Pension Plan has been entering into reciprocal agreements. And those enable

people from here to move to another province and take their pension asset with them. It also enables people to move from other provinces here and bring their pension asset with them and become part of the plan.

So the answer is yes, as long as you have a reciprocal agreement. Looking at the list of people we have reciprocal agreements with, I'm not sure that it's a complete list. I don't think it applies to every province or city. But we do have reciprocal agreements with some of the provinces, namely, Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick. And then I see we have a reciprocal agreement with the Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

So it looks like it's not a very complete list. It's a partial list. And I think from the point of view of the Public Employees Pension Plan, we're quite interested in entering into reciprocal agreements but we don't have reciprocal agreements with all other employees and provinces.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I would certainly encourage the administration to continue to try to make those kind of flexibilities a reality.

One of the questions that I had asked you earlier, Mr. Minister, in a different form, but it has application here. And that question is regarding the possible or any planned indexing of the pension plan for public employees. And I realize that you gave me a response and I thanked you for that privately.

But I think, for the record, would you indicate if there's any plans in trying to index these particular pension plans, because I have been getting some questions from retirees in this plan.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, there is no plan, Mr. Chair, to index this plan, and the reason being that it is a defined contribution plan, and I don't think there are defined contribution plans that are indexed.

I think there are some defined benefit plans in other jurisdictions that have, as a component of the defined benefit, a right to indexing, but that is not the case with respect to defined contribution plans. The reason being that the way that defined contribution plans work is that, rather than defining whether you're entitled to a certain benefit plus indexing in some cases, those plans work by defining the contribution that you need to make.

And what we do, and I guess where indexing really comes from in this kind of plan, is that when the money is paid in by the employer and the employee, we're responsible to put that money into investments that will earn interest for the contributing employee. And then when the employee retires, that money would go into an annuity that would be chosen by the employee.

So it's a separate account for employees. There is no unfunded liability; there's no defined benefit. And so it isn't a situation where you could bring about indexing I guess even if you wanted to, which we don't because that would create an unfunded liability. It would not be appropriate for a defined contribution plan.

Mr. Wakefield: — Good. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I've just got a couple of general questions, if I could, just to kind of sum up here.

One of them is: what was triggering the amendments at this particular time? Was there some particular events or some requests that were triggering that? Was it being requested from the employers, from the employee . . . or the potential people that will benefit from them? I just wondered why this is happening now.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, this has been requested by representatives of the employees who are on the pension board and also representatives of the employers who are on the pension board.

And once they made these suggestions, a process of consultation was undertaken with the various employees of the various employers and they were asked what they thought of these changes. Generally speaking, the changes were approved, and I think it's fair to say that it's as a result of members of the plan, both the employers and the employees, saying that they felt that these changes would be improvements to the plan.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair, how does this PEPP (Public Employees Pension Plan) plan kind of, in overall general terms, how would it compare with a pension plan that — and I know there's probably lots of them — a generally recognized pension plan in private industry or how would it compare with other sectors of the economy?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that the plan compares just about on par with defined contribution plans that are in the private sector. However, that there are not that many defined contribution plans actually in the private sector either because they still have defined benefit plans or in some cases, many cases — probably too many — because people simply do not have pension plans. But this is on par with defined contribution plans that do exist in the private sector.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair. Looking into the future, can you foresee any other changes that are going to have to be made fairly quickly in this particular plan? Can you see that we're going to have to revisit this in the next short while, or do you think you've captured enough of the changes and flexibility needed, asked for by both employees and employers?

Are we getting to what is really needed for the next foreseeable future? Because I think it's important that, if we don't do it now, it might be some time before it gets reviewed again.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, we believe that these changes respond to the wishes of the employees and employers as far as we know them at the present time. We have not had other suggestions coming forward for amendment. So at the present time we don't know of any other changes that are being requested.

But of course it's like everything else. We can't predict that in a year's time that they may not come forward and ask for more

changes.

But right now there's nothing on the order paper, to put it that way, from the members of the plan or the employers that isn't really being responded to, and no major outstanding issues that we see.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, I have no further questions.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to say thank you to the minister and Mr. Smith for answering the questions this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to thank the member from Lloydminster and the official opposition for co-operation with respect to this matter, and also to thank Mr. Smith for his assistance. And with that, I'd like to move that we report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 18 — The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Women's Secretariat Vote 41

The Deputy Chair: — I'll invite the Minister responsible for the Women's Secretariat to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is Faye Rafter, the executive coordinator of the Women's Secretariat; and Joan Pederson, the assistant executive coordinator of the Women's Secretariat.

Subvote (WS01)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I welcome, Madam Minister, and welcome to your staff, Faye Rafter and Joan Pederson. It's great to see you again.

Madam Minister, since 1995, since I was elected I've had the opportunity and responsibility to be critic for women's affairs, for Women's Secretariat. In fact I think there was a time in there where you were gone and I was still here, so I've been watching it with great interest for the last five or six years.

When I was first elected and the first time we had an opportunity to talk about it in 1996, I asked you to describe the work of the Women's Secretariat. So when I was preparing for today's discussion, I looked back and at that time you'd said that the secretariat work included policy development for women, public awareness, policy coordination, administrative work related to government goals and objectives, and financial work related to government goals and objectives.

This is a huge responsibility for a small department, and I at that time had fear that maybe it was just the way the government gave lip service to women's issues. So for the past six years I've been watching to see what kind of a difference this department has made in the lives of women. And maybe you could briefly describe to me what the difference is now in the year 2000 compared to the year 1996 when we first started talking about this.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm pleased to provide the member with the kind of work we've been doing.

I would I think have to concede that in the early days of the secretariat there was probably no doubt that we had a bit of a narrower role in terms of our relationships with other departments of government. But we also had perhaps a narrower relationship with the community at large.

And the Women's Secretariat has worked very hard to build substantive relationships with the Aboriginal women's community, with the farm women's community, with the disabled community.

Because one of the things that became apparent as we started to do our substantive research into women's economic and social equality, was that not all women were affected the same by government policy. And certainly those differences became important differences when considering matters like pension, income tax, the design of programs, health care funding, whatever that you might care to name — that the effect is different depending on the circumstances of women.

So we've put quite a bit of effort into getting more substance in the various areas.

On the federal level, we've been involved in national strategies, both on violence against women but also on the economic indicators project, so the well-being of women can be measured in a comparative way from government to government across Canada to see the performance of different governments and their policies and programs on the well-being of women.

Because of course, Mr. Speaker, some people say that you judge a society by the well-being of their women and children. And we do think that these indicators are very important from the point of view of being able to compare that policy and program performance.

The other thing that we've done is some very specific work. It became apparent to myself and the staff, on reflection, that women were perhaps not as familiar with how to have their perspectives reflected in government and how to participate in the political processes of government. So we did quite a bit of work out in the community on capacity building.

And I'm pleased to say that the work that we have done . . . For example, in the Aboriginal women's community, there was very few Aboriginal women elected a few years ago. Now they have quite a presence within their self-government framework and there's many women chiefs and councillors today. And certainly we have helped facilitate that process within the Aboriginal community.

(1615)

As well, we've worked with the broader women's community to talk about how to effectively have your input to government, to be part of the decision making. And certainly there's a number of committees that exist now between the government and the community, whether it's the STOPS to Violence partnership or other things in the child action plan etc., that have the government much more in a working relationship with the community so that people who perhaps don't have as their first focus being political can have their input into government.

The other thing that became apparent to us, Mr. Chair, is that women, although they are often the people who use technology, were not using technology much to meet their own needs. And we embarked on a large women on line project where we did a lot of capacity building in the area of women using Internet and computer technology. And this was for women in remote locations, rural areas, reserves, and urban areas. And that was certainly a very successful program with a huge uptake from the community.

So I think that sort of captures some of the things. Now there's been some broad debates going on about some of our safety net programs — EI (Employment Insurance), Canada Pension Plan, income tax change. And we've also felt that, because women tend to be more dependent on safety nets, that it's very important any time these policies are changed to look at how they're going to affect women who so far . . . And it's not due to any fault of our own, Mr. Speaker — we still outlive men and because of that tend to be both old and poor.

And so part of our goal in the secretariat is to make sure that women aren't frail and elderly and poor, through the various policy initiatives.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I never cease to be amazed that whenever we talk about it I seem to get this same kind of answer from you. And every year we talk about the reports that you've done and the briefs that you've done and the talks that you've done and the committees you've been on, but as far as something tangible that's going to help the women of this province, women that need transition homes, women that are still living in hunger and poverty, women that live with drug and alcohol problems every day, I don't see anything different that your department is working on.

I know that you've talked about the successful women on line technology program. And I know that you and I had a difference of opinion on that because we spent the first considerable amount of money that this government has actually given to women in the last six years on a computer Internet line service when there was so many things that I and a lot of other women considered a lot more needful than

computer training.

So, Madam Minister, when I look at the reports for the year 1999 into the year 2000, there was only one report that I saw that was a whole lot different, and that was one that you had done on a profile of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan.

Now I see that it's a coloured brochure with a . . . fairly lengthy, fairly in depth. Could you give me an idea of how much . . . what the cost of this was to be printed and how many copies were made?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I will just mention that the quantity originally printed was 8,000 for a cost of 41,000. And the demand was so high for the report that we've printed another 4,000 for a cost of 14,000 because people had been wanting this information to work with in program design, and also in making their case to the various people they need to make a case to in order to obtain funding and support for the programs I think that you're referring to.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, give me an idea of the kind of groups that are looking for this report.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Aboriginal organizations, people within the bureaucracy, employment equity coordinators, chambers of commerce, Crown presidents, regional colleges, elementary schools, high schools, K to 12 schools, education and training, women's studies, people doing human resource policy development, health districts, individuals, legal organizations, libraries, media, MLAs, Metis Nation, family support agencies, unions, crisis services, victims' services, women's groups, local government, churches, health organizations, city police, RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), professional associations, National Farmers Union board, regional economic development authorities, regional service centres, federal/provincial/territorial ministers and senior officials, the interdepartmental committee on family violence, the interdepartmental Aboriginal economic development committee, the Action Plan for Children Committee.

And that would just give you some idea of the requests that we've had from different people.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, one of the interesting things about this profile of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan that costs so far \$56,000 is the fact the newest information is 1996.

Now with the changes now that we have . . . the speed of changes that is happening in this province with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, I would wonder whether spending \$56,000 in a budget that is awfully limited for women, is this amount of money, this \$56,000, was it just the production or was it actually the cost to get the material together? And is there any newer statistics than 1996 that could be put into this book to actually benefit the women that are needing this material?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If it wouldn't be completely self-evident, Mr. Chair, why all of these organizations, who amongst them spend millions and millions of dollars, would base that spending on good, solid information, \$56,000 is a very small amount to spend on making sure that you spend millions

appropriately.

So I quite frankly don't get your point when it comes to that. And the reason why the information is where it's at, if we had more money we could do better studies and have them more up to date. But we have to pay StatsCanada for special runs on data that they don't normally provide. And that is the most up-to-date data that StatsCanada has.

Now if we were able to get more up-to-date data, we would be very happy about that. But that would be an additional cost to be able to provide that.

And one of the things that providing the information does is that it makes people understand that it is important and it is useful, and that therefore, they might up the importance within their budgetary processes of producing up-to-date information.

Ms. Draude: — Well, Madam Minister, I would definitely challenge you to think that this information that's from 1996 is going to make a big difference. But anything that will help the Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan is definitely beneficial.

Are you working . . . or how closely did you work with Department of Northern Affairs for their input to see how necessary this was? I know that in your staff of 14 people, most of the money that is spent in the secretariat is spent on personnel. So spending \$56,000 on top of your personnel must have been a large percentage of whatever money was left over for your department.

So again, Madam Minister, I'm just wondering who actually wanted this material, and have you done anything to make you believe that this is really a successful use of your money?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well again, as you know, one of the biggest issues in dealing with society's problem is for people to understand society's problem. And I think the long list of people I read out, which I can read again if I read it too quickly the last time, suggests people who feel that this is important for them to have accurate information.

And whether it's the women going to their band council to justify why they need something in the area of children's funding, whether it's libraries who are looking at what the most appropriate materials they might get that meet the needs of the population that they're serving, whether it's police who are looking at human justice issues and how they might deliver more appropriate legal and justice services or community policing services — all of these people seem to think that this was worthwhile enough information that we had to do a second printing.

Because it wasn't that we were forcing it upon them. They saw the value of this information. And it's no different than when you do surveys on diabetes and you identify that there's a certain area where there's a high intensity of diabetes and you decide that you're going to target your medical spending to that diabetes problem. This is no different than that, only we're dealing with social and economic issues as well as health and other issues.

And so it's the notion that you really pinpoint where the

problem is and then use your resources well on that problem. And all of these agencies who requested reports are people who are using it in that way.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, and Madam Minister, how much money above salaries and accommodation and office expenses does your department have to deal with specific programs for the secretariat?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We just wanted to make sure, Mr. Chair, that we were getting this exactly right. The personal services which is essentially the salaries and what not, is 813,000. And then other expenses are 380,000, and that includes things like policy documents, meetings with women's groups, small grants, all that other range of things that are done.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, so then you have about \$300,000 to spend on grants or policy development or whatever you may call it. Can you give me an idea . . . can you give me a list of the grants that you have given out this year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Just a little clarification, Mr. Chair. Do you want us to just get a copy of this and send it across, because there's several pages. I don't think you want me to read it out. If we could just get a copy and then we'll . . .

The total, Mr. Chair, is 106,400.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and Mr. Chair. So we have 106,400 and grants out of the 300,000. And I would believe that . . . also in the annual report I see that there was about \$70,000 paid out in contract services. Could you give me an idea of what the nature of those services were, how many people were actually given a contract by your department, and give me also a list of that.

(1630)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, I think I could send this across. But they're very small; it comes to about 9,250. And again I'll get this copied and send it across — contracts.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, perhaps I should be asking the minister if you have a copy of the . . . or the answer to the global questions we normally ask. Before we can vote this off, we would like a copy of that. I know we won't be doing it today, but we'll be talking again later on and I would like the answers to those questions.

Madam Minister, I just noted that in the grants this year, there was the largest by far grant was one for \$47,000 to support, to research, develop and organize a one and a half day forum for WOOL (women's organization on line program) recipients. Could you give me an idea of what that is?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is I guess a further development of the WOOL project where all the people that were involved in the project are having a day and a half of further training and development and upgrade on the skills they developed in the first stage of the project.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I'm sorry, I'm going to have to ask you again. I don't know what the WOOL project is.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. Women's organization on line.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So then we have an additional \$47,000 out of this year's money that was again for this technology program from the . . . for the last two years. Out of the \$300,000 that we have for policy development and all the other issues that women need, we spent an additional \$47,000 on women Internet. Plus we've spent 50,000, or \$56,000 on their Aboriginal book, and \$70,000 for contracts. And I guess on top of that we have \$55,000 spent on travel.

Can you give me an idea whom would be doing most of this travelling, how often it was done, and typically for what purpose?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There would be basically I guess three kinds of travel. About once a year on a very special year, sometimes twice, I would get together with other women ministers about common issues across Canada; the deputy ministers who are working as lead developers of different projects at the national women's forum has agreed to, to do with the economic and social comparators, the violence against women, and projects.

They would be travelling to participate in the work that goes on there. And as well there would be a lot of travel around the province to meet with women's organizations to do the capacity building workshops that we did last year, to travel to the Aboriginal women's conference, the Metis women's conference, the farm women's conference, that kind of thing.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, so I'm at 230,000, or \$231,000 approximately, of this \$300,000 that was spent for . . . money spent beyond personnel. So maybe you could break down further where that money went to, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The other money would be things like telephones, rent, all those kind of standard things that exist in an office.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I notice that, referring to the most recent *Public Accounts*, I see that \$44,000 was paid to the Minister of Finance to the Department of Agriculture. Could you tell me what that money was given out for?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Chair, that money was part of the farm stress line. It was actually two years ago that that was . . . I think that's the amount of money you're referring to in the *Public Accounts*, and that was used for the stress line to put the human resource directory on-line.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, Madam Minister, and welcome to your officials as well. I wonder if I could ask some questions for a moment on I guess an issue that's of growing interest in terms of women in Saskatchewan, and it has to do with women in business.

And I know that some of this may come under the purview of the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development, but I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if your department . . . if the Women's Secretariat have done any research into women entrepreneurs in our province, and frankly the growing number of women in business in our province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Actually I've been at several conferences that the business women have sponsored on this topic. Now we've provided a directory of programs for women in business is one of the activities that we've done.

And as well we've worked with other departments of government on things like the Small Business Loans Association program for women entrepreneurs, the Co-operative Department supports to home-based business. And I just look at all of these things, the neighbourhood development organizations that provides support to basically community economic development organizations, many of the people involved in that would be women.

And so it's basically both information to women who are interested in getting into business and providing also that data in our database about the economic circumstance of women in business. Because although women are becoming very successful in business, I have to say the income levels, pension benefits, maternity benefits, etc., of women in business are actually still at a very low level. And although it's encouraging to see people doing this, it is not making much of a difference in women's economic status.

Mr. Wall: — I'm pleased to hear, Mr. Deputy Chair, Madam Minister, I'm pleased to hear that you identify one particular issue and that's maternity leave as it relates to women in business.

I'm not sure I share your concern about whether or not women going into business is . . . I mean you brought in a lot of issues there that seemingly are more tied to salaries, to people who are on a salary than to women who own their own business and, of course, theoretically have an unlimited potential to generate revenue.

But anyway I'm wondering, I guess the specific question I have is, trying to get information in this area in terms of the number of women in business in our province — the success rate of women in business in our province — is actually quite a difficult thing to do. I've checked with Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc. I think officials have even checked with your secretariat and possibly the Department of Economic Development.

Do you have any plans or are you considering any plans to have a really detailed look at this issue? They are becoming a growing, important part of that most important engine of our economy — small business.

And I'm wondering, in light of some of your comments on some of the other work that the secretariat has done and that the cost for that was worthwhile, do you have any plans to try to get a better handle on the amount of . . . the number of women in business in our province and their impact on our economy?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The Department of Economic Development does have the most direct relationship but I will give you a little bit of the statistics that we do have here because we do pay attention to this area.

The number of women in Saskatchewan who are self-employed in 1998 — again the availability of the census data — 34 per

cent of the self-employed were women. From 1981 to '98, the number who were self-employed increased from 11,000 to 43,000. And also between 1981 and '99, women increased as a portion of the total labour force from 38.4 per cent to 45 per cent. So there's both an increase in women participating generally in the labour force, but also an increase of about 10 per cent in women-led businesses.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair and Madam Minister, thank you for that answer. I think you'll . . . I think the numbers also bear out that women actually are being more successful lately in terms of business start-ups than men are. And certainly I'd expect that to be the case here in Saskatchewan.

I have a specific question related to one of the issues you raised in an answer, two answers ago, and it related to maternity, the issue of maternity for women in business. As you know, a woman in the workforce has some protection there in terms of maternity leave — both for some income while she's caring for the children and also for a guaranteed job to come back to — neither of those things exist for women in business.

And I know that employment insurance clearly is a federal issue, but given the importance of women in terms of the small-business sector of our economy and the increasing importance of women as part of our small-business sector, has the Secretariat or other organizations that you network with considered even any provincial measures that might address this inequity where women entrepreneurs, women in business who are interested still in having a family face a clear discrimination — although inadvertent — as opposed to men who are in business or women who are in the workforce? Are you aware of or is your Secretariat considering any initiatives in this regard?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Basically I think what I'd say about that is because this growth has been fairly recent, and I think public policy always lags a bit what's happening in the community. I mean, we've still got difficulties in providing things like day care on a national/provincial co-operative basis.

And I think the only country in the world that provides maternity benefits to people who are not salaried employees I think is Denmark. So this is a fairly rare situation worldwide but I think it's important, and I think it's something we should look at because a woman who's self-employed is just as pregnant as the one who's employed by someone else.

And certainly I think it's an important area for future development and policy. But as you know, of course, in all policy areas there's a cost — a public cost — to safety net programs and to benefit programs. And I think some of the discussion that you would get into there would be around the area of the expansion of that policy.

But for myself, I think those policies should be within the framework of EI policy, because that's a universal system that people can contribute to without setting up a separate bureaucracy and a separate program. And certainly again, if there are people wanting to take up that discussion, I think that's a valuable discussion to have.

(1645)

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, thank you, Madam Minister. Just to wrap up, I guess I think it would be . . . it would do us all a service if either your agency or perhaps the Department of Economic and Co-operative Development could perhaps through the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan even survey women entrepreneurs in the community.

In terms of measuring the cost of any kind of an initiative, whether it was on the tax-credit side or some sort of insurance side, I think it's going to be greatly affected by the number of people interested in something like that. Because clearly many women entrepreneurs aren't interested for whatever reason, in raising a family, or are past that point.

And so it would probably be a service for all of us to find out how many people would be interested in something like that. And possibly even if they're, possibly even if they're willing to share the premiums of something like that if it were a premium-based thing. And I don't know what it would be.

But just with that I'd thank you, Madam Minister, and your officials, for allowing me these questions, and Mr. Deputy Chair.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and good afternoon to the minister and her officials.

Madam Minister, I notice in your contracts that there is a statement here of final payment for funding opportunities for Saskatchewan women and families — a payment of \$2,500 going to Lorraine Thompson. I'm wondering what service this is actually providing and how Lorraine . . . if she's a part of any other organization? And if you could explain what the initiative was meant to do and how it's meant to help women and families.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. Lorraine Thompson, I don't know her, but she's the person who did the original publication on funding opportunities for women. And then she did an update of that document as the information became outdated.

Ms. Julé: — All right. Madam Minister, could you give me the dollar figure of the complete funding to Lorraine Thompson. I notice this is the final payment. What was the full payment to her?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, we've got the past year's information with us, and the two . . . actually she updated two publications: *Sources of Support for Saskatchewan Women* and *Funding Opportunities for Saskatchewan Women* and families for a total of \$8,000.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, just below that statement there's a statement of some money going to Social Services to reimburse them for profiling children in Saskatchewan. I guess I just need some clarification and justification on as to why Social Services didn't assume this sort of responsibility for funding of that kind of a profile rather than the Women's Secretariat?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's a government-wide integrated project that all departments contributed to, so it was a matter of pooling resources for a number of different departments to be

able to do it. And it was coordinated.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Madam Minister, I'm just going to ask you for two separate pieces of information for the next time we meet.

Could you give me a breakdown, a complete breakdown of the \$300,000 or whatever the actual figures is for all the monies that was spent by your department that wasn't directly on personnel? And the other one — could you give a total spent on the WOOL, the women on-line project for the next time we meet as well? The total amount of money spent?

Thank you, Madam Minister, and to your officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If I could just say, yes, we'd be happy to do that, Mr. Chair. I would just like clarification if we're talking about in one budget year?

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Chair, and Madam Minister, the total amount of money spent on this project from the first time we started talking about it.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:52 p.m.