

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the House signed by the good citizens of Gull Lake. And it deals with a request for a reduction in fuel tax by 10 cents a litre. The prayer reads as follows:

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

I so present.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition for improved cellular telephone coverage in the province of Saskatchewan. 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 petitioners on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Cudworth, from Saskatoon, from Rockglen, and Regina, Saskatchewan, as well as Craven.

I so present.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the increasing cost 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 all from my community of Melfort.

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 fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, and the signatures are from the community of

Govan.

And I so present.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too 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 the signatures on this are from Govan.

I so present. Thank you.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people primarily from my constituency also concerned about 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 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 all of the petitioners on this particular one, Mr. Speaker, are from Swift Current, save one who is from Regina Beach.

I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, I too 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.

The signatures here are all from the town of Davidson.

I so present.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I rise to bring a petition to oppose enforced municipal amalgamation. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people from the Rural Municipality of Paddockwood, No. 520.

I so present.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding 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.

And the petitioners are from the good village of Shell Lake.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Clerk:** — According to order the following petition has been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) it is hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly:

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

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan): what is the average age of vehicles insured by SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) at this time?

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

Does SGI charge people who incur vehicle damage due to highway conditions a \$100 surcharge on their drivers' licences, registrations, or auto insurance if they make a claim? Is this surcharge applied in those cases where the Department of Highways accepts responsibility for the damage? If so, is this policy under review?

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

To the Minister of Health: how many MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) are provided annually in Saskatchewan, and what is the cost to the health system to provide an MRI?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to introduce through you and to the members of the Assembly, a class of 38 students from Colonsay from my constituency. They're

accompanied with their teachers Les Eley, Kathy Weir, Bev Eley, and Lynsey Wilkins. They're seated in the east gallery.

Would you please join me to welcome them.

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

**Hon. Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the House, 49 students sitting in your west gallery from St. Philip School, grades 6, 7, and 8.

They're with their teacher John Bundgaard and Brad Ehr, and chaperones Rod Shivak, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, and Krissy Haynes. Welcome to the legislature.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the legislature, a group of grade 6 to 9 students from the Countryside Mennonite School at Saltcoats. They're accompanied by their teacher Ms. Rogers and a number of parents and chaperones.

I would ask the members of the legislature to welcome them here today. I'll be meeting with them later.

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the legislature, a number of people who are sprinkled in different galleries here so I can't point to the specific gallery, but I'll ask them to stand in a minute.

These are the people who have quite literally built this province, Mr. Speaker. They're the trades people who have built the houses, done the plumbing, done the wiring, done the steel work, done all the work that goes into all the construction and trades in this province.

And because there's a number of folks, I won't go name by name, but I just ask you to welcome these people who are here to see today the second reading of The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act. If you could stand and be recognized, and we'll welcome you to the legislature.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to extend a welcome to the tradespeople and the construction workers of this province. I'm glad you could make it today. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly, four people seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Two of them are constituents of mine. Chad and Jaime McCormick are brother and sister and son and daughter of John McCormick, the NDP (New Democratic Party) candidate in Moosomin

during the last election.

With Chad and Jaime, Mr. Speaker, are two of their friends, Jen Cronk, who is a resident of Saskatchewan but who was invited and has spent two years playing baseball in Australia and working there, and Jen is back potentially for good, but it's unresolved yet whether she'll be redrafted to Australia.

And another friend is Paul Simon, who is a resident of Perth, Australia, and Paul is visiting Saskatchewan for the next nine months. This is Paul's first visit to Canada and I ask all members to help me in welcoming him to Saskatchewan.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Humboldt Company Receives Funding

**Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today to announce more good news for the province of Saskatchewan. Today the Minister of Economic Development and her federal counterpart were in Humboldt to announce \$331,175 in funding under the Canada-Saskatchewan Western Economic Partnership Agreement, or WEPA, to Western Canada Testing Inc.

This funding will help Saskatchewan take a big step toward opening up new export markets in Europe for agricultural equipment manufacturers by helping manufacturers across Western Canada meet stringent European Union import requirements for machinery.

This project responds to the needs voiced by the agricultural implement industry. The project will give the industry a competitive edge and increased sales to the European Union. Over the next 10 years this project could create more than 1,100 person-years of employment in the agricultural implement manufacturing sector and increase sales to the European Union countries by \$134 million.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan continues to be known for its innovative agricultural equipment industry. This project will continue to see our top quality farm equipment at work all around the world.

My congratulations to all the partners involved in the project and to the dynamic town of Humboldt whose success in economic development continues to be a model for rural Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

### Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 Celebrations in Borden

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night I had the privilege of attending the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 celebrations in Borden. Borden was selected as one of the many trail of celebrating communities and will be having a stretch of the Trans Canada Trail passing on the outskirts of its community.

The trail is the longest shared-use recreational trail in the world,

spanning 16,100 kilometres and joining the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific oceans. It will accommodate the five core activities — walking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and snowmobiling.

Eight water carriers were also selected from Borden. I would like to congratulate Brian Kraft, Julia and Jeanette Unruh, Jenna Rempel, Meaghan Dyck, Don Sutherland, Lore Neufeld, and Lorraine Olynyk for being chosen to take part in the historic relay that is transporting water from the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific oceans to its final destination in the National Capital Region where it will be symbolically poured into a newly constructed Trans Canada Trail fountain to officially proclaim the opening of the Trans Canada Trail on September 9, 2000.

I would also like to congratulate the members of the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 committee and the Riverbend Trans Canada Trail Incorporated for organizing the celebration in Borden and putting on the festivities worthy of such a historic event, as well as dedicating their time and efforts in the building of the trail near Borden. Thank you.

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

### Regina's Cathedral Village Arts Festival

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I want to borrow a line from US (United States) Senate candidate, Hillary Clinton, who as you know wrote a book called *It Takes a Village*. Well actually, Mr. Speaker, she stole that line from me, because every year at this time I remind members that it's time for them to come to the Cathedral Village Arts Festival, the annual spring festival in my constituency, which utilizes the talent and energy of virtually everybody in the community. It's a truly unique event put on by a unique community.

The 10th festival began on Monday, carries through to Saturday. And, Mr. Speaker, the Village Festival has food and drink, classical organists performing at the Holy Rosary Cathedral, drama and poetry, jugglers, jazz, folk, rock and roll, face painting, a pancake brunch — and that's just for openers.

The Cathedral Village Arts Festival features performances by one of the smallest demographic groups in North America: an English-Canadian, grandmother, MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), cabinet minister Libra drummer with the Cathedral Village Drum Circle — I'm afraid I'm a demographic group of one, Mr. Speaker.

So come to the Holy Rosary on Friday at 8:30, Mr. Speaker, and we'll have your shoes off and your toes tapping before you know it

And my congratulations to creative director, Donna Kriekle, and the whole village for this annual work of art and love.

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

### Old Time Fiddle Jamboree in Battleford

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Battleford will be a busy place this weekend as the Battleford Royal Canadian Legion hosts the fourth annual Old Time Fiddle Jamboree,

which will be held Saturday, May 27 in the Battleford Arena.

Mr. Speaker, in four short years, this fiddle jamboree has become quite a tradition in my constituency. This year's program features many local entertainers as well as some national and international talent.

Mr. Speaker, events like this are not easy to plan, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend all those people in the Battleford who — and surrounding areas — who have worked so hard to make this jamboree possible. And to the rest of the people of Saskatchewan, I would like to invite you to come to Battleford for what promises to be a very entertaining and fun day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Tourism Training

**Ms. Lorje:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the Land of the Living Skies, our beautiful land of lakes, forests, plains, rural life and urban diversity provides our fourth largest economic sector.

Tourism in Saskatchewan, which includes attractions like the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) museum here in Regina and Ron and Kathy Chaplin's bed and breakfast in my constituency of Saskatoon Southeast, generates something like a billion and a half dollars annually and employs 42,000 people. Those numbers are expected to grow to \$2 billion and 65,000 workers in 10 years by which time you and I, Mr. Speaker, will have greater opportunity to sample the delights offered to the tourists to Saskatchewan.

So it is with pleasure and anticipation that I inform the House that today our very busy Minister of Economic Development and of the Internet Highway along with Saskatchewan's federal minister, Mr. Goodale, announced a \$299,000 program to help Saskatchewan tourism operators improve their services to the public.

This program, funded by the WEPA agreement will provide tourism workers with training using the latest information technology. This means they can learn the jobs of tomorrow at home. The training comes to them, not the reverse.

Good news for them, for the industry, and for tourists. Thank you.

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

### New Bed for Cancer Patients

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today in this Hon. Assembly to bring mention of a person from the city of Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, Tannice Thompson has brought great distinction to herself and to the Victoria hospital foundation.

Ms. Thompson took the initiative, because of her caring heart, to provide cancer patients receiving chemotherapy a great deal more comfort than was previously experienced.

Mr. Speaker, Tannice challenged her colleagues and all

residents of Prince Albert and district to provide the funds necessary to equip the cancer unit with a \$9,000 Hilrom bed. To her amazement, Tannice was so successful that she was not only able to raise enough money for one bed, but with a single contribution of \$9,000 from the Royal Canadian Legion was able to amass enough funds to purchase two of these beds and have more than \$10,000 left over.

Mr. Speaker, it is people like Tannice Thompson who are making a positive difference in Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan hospitals. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the Assembly join me in congratulating Tannice Thompson.

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

### Mining Week

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Mining Week. It would be hard to overstate the contributions of the mining industry to Saskatchewan's economy. We are among the largest exporters of potash and uranium in the world.

Mining is Saskatchewan's third largest industry and employs almost 20,000 people directly or indirectly. We all know how important this industry is to the province, and this week serves to make all of our citizens aware of the benefits of Saskatchewan's mining industry.

Mining has changed to reflect new technologies. Information technology is one of the fastest growing career areas in the mining industry. Right now, 85 per cent of the mining workforce uses advanced technology. Leading edge technology not only contributes to the cost efficiency and productivity of mines but also to their safety. Advanced technology also makes it possible for mines to be more environmentally friendly.

I wish to congratulate all workers employed in the mining sector, including those in research and development, for their contributions to this industry. Their knowledge and innovation has made this industry the success it is today.

Saskatchewan greatly values the contributions of the mining industry. For our top-notch mining industry not only contributes to our province, it contributes to the rest of Canada and to the world.

Once again, I want to congratulate the mining industry for a job well done.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Health Care Review

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is for the Minister of Health. Just a few days ago, the Premier admitted he couldn't convince the Prime Minister to hire him to do a health care review. So the Premier has decided now that there will be a provincial review undertaken.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Party has been calling for a comprehensive review of the health care system since October of 1998. Over and over we have said a review would help us determine how provincial health care dollars are being spent, but it took the NDP to suffer a near-death experience in the provincial election before they sought treatment. And that only with life-support from the Liberals.

Now a year and a half later, a year and a half after the Saskatchewan Party introduced the idea, the Premier has admitted it is needed.

Madam Minister, when can we expect this provincial health care review to get under way?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I happen to have a copy of *The Way Up* which was the Sask Party's election campaign material and just for the recollection of the member, at no place do I see anything about a review. What I do see is a value-for-money audit of the health system where, Mr. Speaker, listen to this — the Provincial Auditor will have the authority to consult with health care specialists and economists as required.

Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about the Provincial Auditor adding up columns of money in terms of expenditures and revenues, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about a review of medicare in the province of Saskatchewan which would ensure, Mr. Speaker, that it is publicly funded and publicly administered and sustains us into the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. At least the minister has got some good reading over there. That's a good first step.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the Minister of Health to release the proposed budgets of the health districts to the public, but so far she has refused.

She even placed a gag order on health district board members to try to keep their budget plans quiet. But some plans for service and facility cuts have been revealed by board members who refused to be muzzled.

Yet in the midst of all the speculation fuelled by the minister who refuses to be open with the public, now we hear the Premier talk about a health care review. The critical question, however, is whether or not this review will take place before or after the health districts go ahead with cutbacks to health services in this budget year.

Madam Minister, can you assure the public today that there will be no hospital or health facility closures and no health service cutbacks in this province until this review is completed?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I see that *The Way Up* has some other interesting things to say about health care. And, Mr.

Speaker, you will know that for some time now the government, the coalition government, has been calling on Ottawa to restore its funding to health services all across this country.

And you will know that hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars — billions of dollars in fact — tens of billions of dollars have been taken out of the health system in this country. And it has created huge problems for health systems across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

What I can say is that we're continuing to discuss with the federal government the need to restore the Canada Health and Social Transfer in order that we can sustain health services into the future, Mr. Speaker. I can say this, that we continue to support a publicly administered, publicly funded health system in this country. We're not going to go to private surgical clinics like those . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister is looking back into history, and she forgot to answer my question. She did review our policy, which I would remind the House more people voted for than for her position.

And speaking of history, Mr. Speaker, the NDP closed 52 hospitals in Saskatchewan under the disguise of something they dreamed up called the wellness model. They said it would help stabilize health care in this province.

In 1998 they closed the Plains hospital, saying it would stabilize health care services in the Regina area. Well health care in Saskatchewan is anything but stable these days.

Health care districts are facing huge deficits, board members are resigning under this minister, specialists are leaving, recruitments of doctors and nurses is difficult because we have a system under siege.

It makes no sense at all to conduct a review after another round of health facility and service cutbacks take place because it's too costly and too difficult to go back . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order, please. I just . . . Order. I remind the hon. member . . . quite lengthy in a preamble. Kindly go to your question.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister: why would you approve cuts to services and closure of health care facilities before a comprehensive review of our health system takes place?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, it's always important that we remind members of some of their previous comments. And, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to remind the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, is his comments from February 15, 1994 on page 1409 of *Hansard* in the House of Commons. Just listen.

Mr. Speaker, he says . . . Mr. Speaker, he says:

I know that most Canadians place a high priority in health care. We had governments that liked to build monuments; that liked to build hospitals. We probably have more hospitals than in any other part of Canada. Unfortunately, we now have no money to operate those hospitals. Our priorities were probably wrong. In fact, I'm sure they were wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, then we have a member say on March 20 of this year — he urged Ottawa to hold back on cash to this province until we completed a provincial audit by the Provincial Auditor. Well, Mr. Speaker, how ridiculous.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister quoted correctly: I am concerned about health care. And governments in the past, including her government, have mishandled health care.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party would welcome — would welcome — a complete review of the provincial health system. After all, it was our idea. But we know how system reviews by this government are handled. The no-fault insurance review has been the most expensive review that has never taken place.

So we want to make sure that if this government conducts a health care review, it is done by a qualified, independent body with clear terms of reference and open public and stakeholder discussion. Don't take a good idea from the Saskatchewan Party and mess it up.

Madam Minister, will you table the terms of reference for this health care review in the House for open debate so the public will have confidence in the process?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe on Thursday, May 18 in *Hansard* he will find that I indicated at the time that there would either be a federal health review in the country or there would be a health review in the province of Saskatchewan.

What I can tell the member is that the terms of reference and mandate will not be about two-tier health care in this province. It will not be about private health care. It will not be about private surgical clinics that allow private hospitals to overcharge.

It will not, Mr. Speaker, violate the principles of the Canada Health Act, which that party calls mindless slogans, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister refuses to answer my question. The minister spoke with the media last week, outside this House, and said there would be a chance for public discussion on health district budgets after they were approved. That is forecast to be in June.

So many public consultations will happen halfway through the budget year and when budget plans are already being implemented. That makes absolutely no sense.

Any review of the provincial health care system must not be backwards and should not include process for public and stakeholder involvement. Health care providers at all levels need to have input during any review.

Health district board members who represent the public need to be able to openly discuss the challenges they have faced and their ideas for improvement without worry of retribution from your department.

Madam Minister, will you assure, will you assure this House an independent review process with complete and open consultation of all stakeholders?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can assure the member is that this year for the first time in many years, we will have health plans approved in June. Mr. Speaker, if you look at previous years, health plans have not been approved until the fall or into the new year, Mr. Speaker. So we've tried to improve the process where we would have health plans approved in June. And I think that's a positive thing, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell the member is that health plans by the province will be put into a provincial context which is welcomed by health districts across this province, because we're looking at this from a provincial plan point of view. The health plans will either be varied, they will be approved, or they will not be approved, Mr. Speaker.

And I can assure the health districts that they will have lots of opportunities to consult with the many stakeholders who are interested in health care, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they will have an opportunity to discuss the health plans with the public.

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

### Construction Industry Union Legislation

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Labour will give second reading of her forced unionization Bill in spite of the fact that she has just received a letter from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce asking her not to proceed with this destructive legislation.

At their recent meeting in Prince Albert, chamber members passed a resolution strongly opposing this Bill. They have now sent that message to the Minister of Labour and the Premier. Madam Minister, these are the people who create the jobs in this province. They have sent you a clear message. Are you listening?

Madam Minister, will you withdraw your forced unionization Bill?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, I continue to wonder what the members opposite have against working people in this province.

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — This Bill does not give people any rights that don't exist everywhere else in Canada. It doesn't require that the industry operate under any different rules that exist anywhere else in Canada. And why the members opposite think our construction companies and workers should have a lower standard here, I don't understand that, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, well the minister always likes to say that it's the same rules across Canada, but the people of Saskatchewan know better. Madam Minister, you keep saying this isn't about forced unionization. The Saskatchewan chamber says that's exactly what it's about. I'd like to quote from the letter you got from the chamber. It says, and I quote:

Although your statements surrounding the amendments claim they will not require all construction workers to automatically become members of a union, clearly the amendments have that very result.

Madam Minister, you're not fooling anyone. The goal of this legislation is to force every construction worker in this province into a union. Madam Minister, why won't you listen to what the chamber is telling you. Why are you proceeding with this forced unionization policy?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, there is no country in the G-7 economies where people don't have the right to unionize. It's a fundamental part of a democratic economy. And the fact of the . . .

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — And the fact of the matter is, is that for the past 25 years, regardless of the government in power, no one has changed the rules around the certification or decertification of unions in this province.

And this one's the only piece of legislation that wasn't in step with the rest in this regard, Mr. Speaker. So I just say that if we're going to operate competitively in a global economy, we need to do it from the basis of the commonly accepted rights.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Madam Minister, here's another quote from the chamber's letter:

The Saskatchewan Chamber . . . has spent the last several months developing the first phase of an action plan . . . to make this province a place where people want to live, work, and invest.

Moves such as this amendment are viewed as anti-business, and make it difficult for all . . . (those who) are attempting to place Saskatchewan in the forefront of economic development and job creation . . .

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan chamber is trying to build our economy. They are telling you this legislation will hurt our economy. Why won't you listen?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, these were the very same laws we had during the years the Saskatchewan economy was booming in the '70s; there's no difference. And if they can explain to me please, why it boomed then and it isn't going to boom now, I'd like to know.

I know it upsets them that we have 10,000 new jobs this year. I know it upsets them that we have some of the lowest costs for businesses operating anywhere in Canada or the United States. We have lower capital tax, lower employee cost, lower health costs. We have manufacturing and processing tax credits. We have everything that people would need here to operate successfully and competitively. And I ask them, what's their problem with a bit of good news?

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know what this minister and this government has against the democratic process. Why don't they allow the workers of this province to vote if they want a union or not?

Madam Minister, the chamber has raised another concern you obviously don't care about — the harmful effect your Bill will have on First Nations' businesses. The chamber says, and I quote:

. . . the Provincial Chamber is also very concerned with the impact of your amendments on companies who have joint-ventured with First Nations (representatives) . . .

Madam Minister, the chamber says this legislation will hurt First Nations' businesses right at a time when they are trying to get ahead by building partnerships with other Saskatchewan companies. Madam Minister, your government should be helping First Nations' workers and businesses build these partnerships. Instead you're kicking them down.

Madam Minister, the chamber is telling you this legislation will hurt First Nations' businesses. Why won't you listen?

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to keep up with the amount of information that is not totally accurate in this House, but the fact of the matter is there are as many examples of partnerships in the unionized as the non-unionized sector regarding Aboriginal employment. I mention the Alliance Pipeline.

But I have to say to the members opposite, that when they ask us to do things differently, or at a lower standard than exists in other provinces in Canada, I just can't understand what their motivation would be.

And certainly we appreciate what the chamber of commerce says and often the government acts on what the chamber of commerce says, as it does on what other people say. But I have to say that, in this particular regard, we have a body of law here that exists in democratic economies and we plan to keep it that way.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister refuses to tell us the real reasons behind this legislation. Fortunately the chamber gives us that answer too. The chamber says, and I quote:

... the amendments you have introduced have nothing to do with workers and wages, and everything to do with politics.

Madam Minister, this Bill has nothing to do with workers. Workers don't want it. It has nothing to do with wages. Non-union construction wages are competitive and in some cases even higher than union wages. This Bill is about politics. It's a political payoff to the unions who bankroll the NDP.

Madam Minister, if you won't listen to us, will you listen ... at least listen to the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and withdraw this legislation?

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't like to keep bringing this up but anybody who accepts donations from Conrad Black isn't sitting on very solid ground.

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The fact of the matter is, is what this Bill does is exactly what the member opposite is opposing. It gives people the right to certify if they wish and it gives people the right to decertify if they wish. So how that is not exactly in keeping with what this member says they want, is for people to have the choice — I don't understand it.

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

#### **Representative Area Networks in Northern Saskatchewan**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Environment minister. Mr. Minister, your department is in the process of establishing a series of representative area networks in northern Saskatchewan.

Would you explain to the House what a representative area network is, and why your government is establishing them in northern Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to the member, I thank him for the question and after several weeks of sitting in the Assembly waiting for questions, I really do appreciate some of these questions.

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, the representative area networks is what Saskatchewan is working with a number of different groups on throughout the province. We're trying to take the different landscapes in the province of Saskatchewan to try and see if we can keep them as they are so we're able to appreciate the environment in which we live and for generations to come.

And northern Saskatchewan certainly is one of the areas that we're looking at. At this stage of the game, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to spread doom and gloom when it comes to the RAN (representative areas network) program.

We are now working with a number of northern groups and northern leaders and northern people to tell them, is the RAN program something you guys can embrace. And if you can embrace that, we'd like to implement that so we're able to protect various sections of Saskatchewan's environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Speaker, another question for the Environment minister. Mr. Minister, as we understand it, the representative area networks or RANs are basically large tracts of lands in northern Saskatchewan that are being identified as no-development zones.

How many RANs is your department establishing, and how much land will be subject to no further economic development as a result?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, this government and this minister is committed to the balance between the environmental protection that is needed in this province and the economic building that is necessary to create a very good economy for the people of Saskatchewan.

We are going to continue building on that, Mr. Speaker. And what we're not going to do is spread doom and gloom like the Saskatchewan Party is, trying to divide the environmental interest with the economic interest of the people of Saskatchewan. And I urge that member to take that approach.

And in reference to his question, there are RAN sites in northern Saskatchewan that we are working towards. And second point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is to also point out within a certain provincial park — La Ronge park to be specific — we have established a mine and we have done no work to destroy the environment. We had the mine proceed. The mine is now done and the environment has been kept as it was.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to the balance between the environmental needs and the economic building that is necessary for the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, your department's decision to severely restrict development in the North has a lot of people very concerned.

On May 9, the La Ronge Mineral Industry Group wrote to you with a number of concerns about the representative area networks. Together they employ hundreds of northern people and generate significant tax revenue for the government.

Mr. Minister, the La Ronge Mineral Industry Group is strongly opposed to the arbitrary established ...



**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order please. I'm sure we'd all like to hear the question. I'm having a difficult time hearing the hon. member.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This group claims that the way in which you are going about establishing these RANs will further discourage business investment in the North and will have a serious, negative impact on the entire provincial economy.

Mr. Minister, if Northerners say the establishment — the arbitrary establishment of large, no-development zones will hurt the economy, kill jobs, and chase businesses out; why are you going ahead with these projects in this fashion?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I appreciate the question in the House and also invite the member to come to my office. I'll explain the whole RAN program to him in detail.

But what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, this government and this minister's going to continue looking for that balance. We have been doing some significant consultation and work with the people of the North, with the different environmental groups, and also with the people that are involved with economic building within the province.

And what is amazing to me, Mr. Speaker, what is totally amazing to me is you start hearing some northern concerns, environmental concerns, from a party that has never done anything significant for the North, and has on many occasions, through the history of this province and right across the country of Canada, has never had the environmental agenda on their list at all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, it's not just these groups that have had these concerns. I just met with the World Wildlife Fund. The World Wildlife Fund says they submitted a number of potential RAN sites to you based on scientific research but your government hasn't responded. They, as well as the mining and exploration industry, are angry that the NDP is arbitrarily proceeding with the RAN projects without adequate . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — . . . without consideration for their input.

Mr. Minister, here's where both industry and environmental groups agree. They think your arbitrary process is flawed and harmful. And the first casualties of your mismanagement are Northern people, your constituents, who will lose their jobs.

Mr. Minister, will you step in today and put a stop to this process until you have consulted with all the stakeholders?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to

respond to that member's questions. I want to point out on one hand a few questions ago he asked me, what are you doing; you're destroying the economy. And now he quotes the wildlife federation. Make up your mind. Do you want less RANs or do you want more RANs?

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is this government, this minister has an agenda. We're going to balance all the interests of the people of Saskatchewan as best as we can.

And when he talks about the environment, he talks about the North, he talks about the jobs, I can get the Minister of Northern Affairs to give him all the stats he needs until it's coming out of his ears.

The bottom line is this party, this government, is going to balance the interests of the economy and the environment and Northern interests — something that that party has never done and will never do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 55 — The Land Titles Act, 2000

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 55, The Land Titles 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. 56 — The Land Titles Consequential Amendment Act, 2000/Loi de 2000 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Land Titles Act, 2000

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 56, The Land Titles Consequential 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. 57 — The Land Surveys Act, 2000

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — I move that Bill No. 57, The Land Surveys 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. 58 — The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2000

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 58, The Condominium Property 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.

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — I ask leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly, Mr. Gerald Gerrand, Q.C. (Queen's Counsel), sitting in your gallery, the new Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gerrand was born in Melville in 1931 — although you'd never notice it — where his father E.W. Gerrand practised law and also served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Gerrand graduated from the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan in 1954 and articulated for his father, and he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1970.

Throughout his career, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gerrand has practised law with great distinction in this province and has served the people of Saskatchewan well, and I know that he will continue to do so.

Also, Mr. Speaker, please join me, and members, please join me in welcoming Mr. Gerrand's wife Ella, his daughters Nancy, Kelly, and Wendy Rossmo, and son, David Gerrand, and his two grandchildren Lindsay Gerrand and Luke Rossmo. Mr. Speaker, please help me in welcoming all of them.

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

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

Leave granted.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, we certainly want to join with the Minister of Justice in welcoming Mr. Gerrand here and also congratulating him on these new roles that he will be fulfilling.

I can tell the House that I have had a thankfully uneventful meeting with Mr. Gerrand already, and certainly look forward to working with him in the future. So welcome to he and his family, and again congratulations on the, on the new duties he's about to assume.

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

### TABLING OF COMMUNICATION

**The Speaker:** — Hon. members, before orders of the day, it is my duty to table in this Assembly a letter received from the assistant cabinet secretary and Clerk of the Executive Council, and I will read for the record the content of the letter.

Dear Mr. Speaker

Please be advised that I have received a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer dated May 18, 2000 providing me

with notice of a vacancy in the representation of the constituency of Wood River effective May 17, 2000.

The notice has been provided pursuant to *The Controverted Elections Act* and *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*.

I so table.

### TABLING OF REPORT

**The Speaker:** — I would also table at this time, hon. members, the report, the annual report for the Saskatchewan Legislative Library.

I so table.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pleasure that we table the answer to question 143.

**The Speaker:** — Question no. 143, the answer is tabled.

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Appointment of Information and Privacy Commissioner

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of these comments I'll be moving a motion that this Assembly do recommend that Gerald Lorne Gerrand, Q.C., of the city of Regina, be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council as the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Derril McLeod, Q.C., had, until his recent resignation, served as this province's Information and Privacy Commissioner on an acting and then permanent basis for several years and has done an admirable job in this regard, and many members of course will have become acquainted with him.

Mr. Speaker, the independent function of the Information and Privacy Commissioner pursuant to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is a vital one in ensuring that members of the public have access to public information held by government and in ensuring that private personal information held by government remains private.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner also performs the identical function under The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and in addition The Health Information Protection Act passed in the last session of this Assembly envisages an additional governance function for this office under that Bill.

Mr. Speaker, while the responsibilities of this independent office continue to increase, I'm confident and I know, Mr. Speaker, we all are confident in the abilities of Mr. Gerrand to successfully manage this challenge. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Mr. Gerrand will make this Assembly proud of the way in which he conducts his role and responsibilities as the

Information and Privacy Commissioner.

And I ask all members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to join me in recommending the appointment of Gerald Lorne Gerrand, Q.C., of the city of Regina, as Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swift Current:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor recommending that the Lieutenant Governor in Council appoint Gerald Lorne Gerrand, Q.C., of the city of Regina, in the province of Saskatchewan, as the Information and Privacy Commissioner pursuant to section 38 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I also appreciate, to the member from Melfort-Tisdale, I appreciate the opportunity for some exercise here after, so soon after lunch.

Mr. Speaker, just to join with the Minister of Justice in some very brief comments on the motion before the Assembly today, and certainly to echo the sentiments from the minister about our confidence in Mr. Gerrand's ability to perform these duties as they should be performed.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that on behalf of the official opposition, we did consult with certain groups and certain people in the legal community about the candidacy of Mr. Gerrand for this position and I can tell the Assembly what I told him when we did meet, and that is that he is certainly held in very high esteem and high regard by his colleagues in the legal profession, both here in Regina and around the province.

And he should know . . . he knows that already because, as I said, I mentioned it to him when we met. But I think it should be a matter of the public record, Mr. Speaker, as now we entertain a motion to appoint him as an officer of this honoured Assembly.

And so with those few brief remarks, I am happy to second the motion made by the Minister of Justice.

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

Motion agreed to.

#### **Appointment of Conflict of Interest Commissioner**

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I'll be moving a motion that Gerald Lorne Gerrand, Q.C., of the city of Regina be appointed as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner by this Assembly.

Mr. Gerrand is obviously going to be very busy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, after serving a term of five years as

the Conflict of Interest Commissioner on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Derril McLeod has completed his term and is not seeking reappointment.

We've been indeed fortunate to have had an individual of the calibre of Mr. McLeod to serve as this province's first Conflict of Interest Commissioner. His public service in this regard, Mr. Speaker, has been exemplary and has established this independent office as an integral aspect in promoting public confidence in the activities of the members of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, The Members' Conflict of Interest Act clearly defines the concept of conflict of interest for any member of this Assembly. It sets out the duties required for the members of the Assembly and the cabinet ministers to avoid such a conflict. It also establishes the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner as an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's role in the operation of this legislation is vital. Members are required to disclose all their personal and business interests and those of their spouse and dependent children to the commissioner for use in a public disclosure statement.

In addition, members of this Assembly must seek the approval of the commissioner before participating in any government contract.

The commissioner also serves as a resource to all members of this Assembly in ruling on personal violations of the Act and in assisting members with compliance with the Act.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the role of commissioner is one which requires the utmost trust of this Assembly. The commissioner meets with each member of this Assembly to assist them in ensuring that they've complied with all responsibilities under this Act.

Members, of course, are familiar with Mr. Gerrand and I'll just say a few more things about the skills and attributes Mr. Gerrand brings to this important office. We will recognize and be familiar with him as a well-regarded and highly respected member of the Saskatchewan legal community. And I know that all members will find him to be a tremendous asset and a worthy successor to Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier Mr. Gerrand was born in Melville. His father practised law and was a member of this Assembly. He graduated from the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan in 1954, articulated with his father, practised law here in Regina and his practice has focused on civil litigation, and he's presently counsel with the firm of Gerrand Rath Johnson.

As I mentioned he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1970. He served as a bencher of the law society of the province from 1978 to 1982, and indeed was elected president of the Law Society of Saskatchewan in 1981. In 1982, Mr. Gerrand was elected a fellow the American College of Trial Lawyers. He served on the advisory committee for judicial appointments for the province of Saskatchewan from 1992 to 1996 and was chairman of the committee during the last three years of his appointment.

It's with great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, following consultation with members of the Assembly which I appreciate, through the Board of Internal Economy, that I put forward Mr. Gerrand for the consideration of this Assembly for this position. And I encourage all members of this Assembly to join me in supporting his appointment, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to conclude by moving the following motion, seconded by the member from Swift Current:

That this Assembly hereby appoint Gerald Lorne Gerrand, Q.C., of the city of Regina in the province of Saskatchewan, Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 18 of The Members' Conflict of Interest Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Motion agreed to.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### SECOND READINGS

#### **Bill No. 59 — The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000**

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I'll be moving second reading of Bill No. 59, the construction industry labour relations Act, 2000. There has been . . . Oh, I'd better be technically correct here — The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000 is to be read into the record.

There has been a great deal of public discussion since I first announced our intention to amend this Act on March 14. And that isn't surprising given the complicated nature of the issues around the construction industry as a whole, and this Act in particular.

Also on March 14, the government announced it would end the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, or CCTA, early in 2001. So, Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to end that agreement, we will implement the following measures.

We will amend The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992 and we will review the government tendering guidelines. These actions will contribute to a level playing field for all construction firms in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, taken together, these measures are essential to fair competition within Saskatchewan's industry and will encourage skilled construction workers to remain in our province, as well as aid in the development of new skilled workers through apprenticeship programs.

Mr. Speaker, there are opponents of this legislation, and they have been opposed for a very logical reason. They're protecting their own vested interest in an unbalanced industry. And I say unbalanced because on the one side you have unionized construction companies and non-unionized construction companies both doing their best to survive in a competitive

business.

On the other side you have companies which have for years been playing both sides of the fence. They're operating as both unionized and non-unionized entities at the same time, and using whichever entity will give the advantage in bidding on contracts. And this also provides an unfair advantage in comparison to construction firms operating in other jurisdictions, because Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction where they can operate as both union and non-union at the same time in the same sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, the amendments to The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992 will first and foremost level the unbalanced playing field by prohibiting construction companies from operating as union and non-union at the same time.

This is the double breasting that we have heard about. Now it doesn't mean that companies cannot operate as non-union companies, and it doesn't mean that companies cannot operate as union companies. It merely means that you cannot do both at the same time. And this is the essential point to understand.

And to fully understand it, we need to talk a little bit about the history leading up to these amendments. The imbalance in the construction industry in Saskatchewan dates back to the early 1980s when the downturn in the economy resulted in fewer construction projects. Saskatchewan had introduced construction specific legislation in 1979 to allow for collective bargaining for the unionized workplaces on a province-wide basis.

In the '80s, unionized contractors wanted to lower their costs and began the practice of double breasting or forming non-union spinoff companies. This allowed them in effect to shelve their existing union certification orders.

Now although those certification orders remain, collective bargaining effectively disappeared. This practice accelerated in 1983 with the repeal of the legislation which was introduced in 1979 to govern labour relations in the construction industry.

The practice of double breasting has led to a situation in which companies with spinoffs, operating as both union and non-union at the same time, have the best of all worlds. Such companies are able to, in essence, bid against themselves on construction contracts and can flip from union to non-union depending on the project.

The practice of double breasting as stated in the 1985 Board of Conciliation Report is also fundamentally at odds with the principle of the trade unionism as set out in The Trade Union Act, and I'll quote directly from that Board of Conciliation Report:

To allow a continuation of double breasting in the industry as presently exists, seriously jeopardizes the continued existence of the unionized construction industry.

And that statement is even more true today, because not only does double breasting jeopardize the unionized segment of the industry, it affects the long-term viability of the industry as a whole, as it is not seen as an attractive career choice for young

people.

In 1992, the government, acting on recommendations submitted by the Construction Industry Advisory Committee, passed The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992, or the CILRA. That legislation which we are amending today set the rules for the unionized construction industry with the exception of companies spun off prior to 1992.

Now while there was no new spinoff companies created after that time, the numerous spinoffs created prior to the package remained in operation. The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act and the CCTA were the government's responses to the issues I have just mentioned.

Now neither was perfect and neither has worked the way that everyone hoped they would. So what we have today is a number of companies which established their spinoffs prior to 1992, which are continuing to operate as union and non-union.

And this is what the legislation will prohibit. It will level the playing field and encourage the industry fairness in the province over the long term. And I want to point out that Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada with construction legislation permitting double breasting. Prohibiting this practice will put Saskatchewan on the same footing as other jurisdictions.

As I mentioned, the union certification orders in place prior to the forming of the spinoffs were not revoked and remain in effect today. So what will happen to those companies once the legislation is in enacted?

The legislation contains provisions to protect employees from being terminated as a direct result of these legislative changes. Prohibiting double breasting will not result in the current employees of the non-union spinoff automatically being required to join the union, but after they've been laid off and expressed their desire to work in the unionized sector, they would be required to become union members to work with those unionized firms.

The building trade unions covered by the certification orders that are still in place will need to apply to the Labour Relations Board on a company-by-company basis to request a ruling on whether the unionized parent company and the non-union spinoff are related.

Because of the anticipated increase in applications to the Labour Relations Board as a result of this legislation, there are provisions within the Bill to improve the board's capacity to deal effectively with increased workload. These amendments include authority for an additional Vice-Chair, an ability for the board officer to investigate construction operations to help determine whether union and non-union companies are related.

This legislation also designates the existing representative employer organizations or REOs, the organizations that are authorized to bargain with the construction unions on behalf of all contractors. The amendments name the Construction Labour Relations Association of Saskatchewan as the largest REO, ensuring it will maintain the relationships it's developed with trade unions in 16 trade divisions over the past seven years.

All unionized employers are entitled to membership, and four other REOs are also designated to represent another seven trade divisions. This is a continuation of the status quo. These REOs are already in place.

This Bill designates them in legislation and requires the Labour Relations Board to review and approve or amend their constitutions and bylaws. This will not only ensure REOs are fulfilling their roles as the collective bargaining agent for the unionized employers, but will also enable the Labour Relations Board to consider and approve provisions that ensure the participants in the collective bargaining process adhere to the overall intent of the Act and function as to optimize the purpose of the Act, that is successful collective bargaining on a province-wide basis for unionized contractors and workers.

Debate and discussion about labour relations within the construction industry have been going on for a great many years. And it had been our hope, Mr. Speaker, that these issues could be resolved through consensus within the industry, but that hasn't happened despite our best efforts.

More than 100 meetings with representatives of the construction industry have been held over the past two years in an effort to resolve these matters without having to find the solution in legislation. But it is not possible to legislate co-operation, Mr. Speaker. However, it is possible to legislate solutions, and that's what we're going to do.

At the beginning of my remarks I mentioned there has been a fair amount of confusion surrounding the introduction of these amendments, so I'm just going to finally and further clarify the situation by stating for the record some of the things the legislation does not do.

The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000 does not require all construction companies to become unionized. It does not require all construction workers to automatically become members of a union. It does not require contractors to hire unionized subcontractors. It does not affect the Aboriginal hiring provisions contained in collective bargaining or project agreements.

These amendments to the CILRA will level the playing field for union and non-union contractors by prohibiting all double breasting in the construction industry.

Mr. Speaker, The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000 will bring our province into line with other jurisdictions and put Saskatchewan construction contractors on the same footing with those in other provinces.

So I would now like to move second reading of Bill No. 59, The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to speak to the House on Bill 59, the construction labour relations Act. Mr. Speaker, you can tell a lot about a government and about the state of that government by its attitude and also by the

kind of legislation it brings forward.

We've noticed a more and more arrogant attitude on the part of this government. And we've seen it also now in the legislation they have brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, they had the nerve to talk about forced amalgamation. They've backed off on that temporarily. But now they've gone a step beyond talk, Mr. Speaker. They're not talking about forced unionization; they're actually bringing in a Bill to enable forced unionization.

Mr. Speaker, the minister went into a bit of history, and I think it is good to reflect back in history on things that have happened in the past. And I will do so in regard to this Act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I talk about the attitude of this government. My involvement before becoming the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party and the Official Opposition was to be involved at the federal level.

And we watched an arrogant government, the federal Mulroney government, get wiped off the electoral map, down to two members, because, Mr. Speaker, they failed to listen to people. They started to ram legislation through the House of Commons that the people of this country did not want, and they paid the political price.

And it's amazing to see that this government has not learned from that government. They are following in the same footsteps. They're becoming more and more arrogant daily, Mr. Speaker. And now they are bringing forward Bill 59, the construction labour relations Act, which would force unionization upon Saskatchewan workers even though, Mr. Speaker, they do not want it. And I'm talking about the workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in 1983 the provincial government at the time began allowing construction companies to operate both a union and a non-union arm. And as the minister alluded this is called double breasting. Of course the unions didn't like this much, though a period of labour harmony began about the same time. Saskatchewan has not seen a strike in the construction industry in about 20 years — no strike, Mr. Speaker, in 20 years.

In 1992 the NDP rewrote the trade union legislation making spinoffs — that's non-union arms of union companies — illegal again. However, Mr. Speaker, those companies operating non-union spinoffs were grandfathered and allowed to continue the practice.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, Bill 59, will take away this grandfathering clause. Thus, rules companies have lived under for 20 years in harmony and peace will be rewritten overnight if this Bill is passed.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Construction Association believes these changes will throw their industry into complete turmoil. We've also received many letters from employees of non-union shops very upset with these changes. And, Mr. Speaker, they are the ones who are calling it forced

unionization. Mr. Speaker, it is the workers and the companies that these workers work for that have coined the phrase, forced unionization.

And they have told the Minister of Labour and they have told the government in no uncertain terms that they are opposed to this legislation; they don't want it, they don't need it. They have begged the minister to not introduce it. And here we are today barely into this new government's mandate and they bring forward Bill 59, The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000 which would force unionization upon workers and their companies who do not want it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, editorial writers in the daily newspapers appear to agree that this is little more than forced unionization.

Now it's interesting, Mr. Speaker — and this is something the minister didn't talk about today — it's interesting to note that these spinoffs could have been organized by trade unions at any time. Mr. Speaker, ever since 1983 the unions could have organized themselves in these non-unionized companies. They didn't do it. They were unable to muster support among the workers to unionize.

So what's happened, Mr. Speaker? Now the government is doing what the unions themselves were unable to do simply because there was no support for the kind of action that Bill 59 implements. Mr. Speaker, workers will find themselves suddenly in unions without having to sign a certificate card or without a vote being held. It's kind of abracadabra, voila — we're in the union.

Mr. Speaker, while workers won't have to become official union members right away, they will have to pay all union dues. The Minister of Labour forgot to bring that attention to the House. Mr. Speaker, they will have to pay all union dues.

And as soon as they are laid off — and the minister did mention this — as soon as they are laid off, which is not unusual in the construction industry I might point out, then they will have to become full-fledged union members if they want to return to work for the newly unionized companies.

So, Mr. Speaker, many in the construction industry are laid off in the slow periods, quite often in the wintertime. It's just the cyclical nature of that industry. And so the minister is clever with her words, but the workers see through it right away. They realize that this is just a delay tactic to force people into unions so that they can fulfil her election coffers so she can be re-elected in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, while the government will argue, Mr. Speaker, the government will argue that this legislation will only affect those companies currently with spinoffs, it will actually go much, much deeper than that. The way several of the province-wide collective bargaining agreements are written, subcontractors are required to operate under union rules and pay union benefits, etc.

Mr. Speaker, one of the province-wide contracts in existence today, one contract in existence today requires . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another side of an arrogant government is they don't like to hear the truth and they start making a lot of noise.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the existing province-wide contracts even requires subcontractors to purchase supplies — supplies — from union-only shops, severely limiting competition.

In other words, the changes made in this Bill will affect many, many smaller construction companies throughout the province who are subcontracting work for the larger companies that the government says it has targeted. In reality, the effects of this Bill will be far more wide-reaching.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, Bill No. 59, is like a creature with tentacles reaching out throughout the entire construction industry, in fact eventually reaching to the taxpayers' wallets in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the government will also argue that we need to promote labour harmony. In fact as I mentioned earlier, Saskatchewan has gone through an unprecedented era of labour peace in the construction industry. Why would the minister want to disturb something that's working? Why does she want to irritate the workers and the businesses that are doing so well in the construction industry today. She didn't give us a reason in her introduction to the Bill as to why she would want to rock the boat when everything is working so well.

Also the government will state that we need these changes in order to promote a fair wage policy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, figures show that wages in open shops are competitive, and often, Mr. Speaker, they are even better than union wages. In some cases, workers such as apprentices, are far better off in an open shop.

Mr. Speaker, the government will also state that these changes are necessary to stop companies from getting around the spirit of the rules. And I think I heard the minister making that argument a few minutes ago.

Well I would say, Mr. Speaker, in reality not a single complaint, to my knowledge, not a single complaint has been filed with the Labour Relations Board alleging a company was double breasting illegally. Why this legislation, Mr. Speaker?

The government is trying to tie this legislation to the ending of the Crown corporation tendering agreement. However in reality the two are not related except through politics. The CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) union tendering policy was adopted as a sop to the unions who wanted spinoffs totally outlawed in 1992.

Now the government is trying to use the CCTA's scrapping to cover the other changes it is making, which the construction association says are far worse, far worse than the horrible, horrible CCTA.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note the background to all of this mess, the introduction of this legislation. The NDP got about \$300,000 from the various unions last year — \$300,000. About \$12,000 of this came from the construction trades, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, obviously . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order please. Hon. members from both sides, there'll be ample time to debate this issue. I would ask all hon. members to kindly allow the speaker to be heard.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because they were making so much noise over there, I'll repeat what I said. The NDP got about \$300,000. I see the minister from Saskatoon Meewasin doesn't believe that the NDP got \$300,00 from the unions. Well she just has to look at the election returns that her party filed and she will see that her party got \$300,000 from the unions, \$12,000 from the construction trade, Mr. Speaker.

Now even more interesting is that the Labour minister herself received thousands of dollars in donations from the unions.

Now at best, Mr. Speaker, at best . . . and now I see the Deputy Premier is heckling and making a noise. I believe probably the deputy minister's campaign was also . . . the Deputy Premier's campaign was also funded by the unions. But at the minimum, these donations appear to be a huge conflict of interest at a time when the government is concocting this heavy-handed piece of labour legislation which is tantamount to forced unionization.

At worst, Mr. Speaker, at worst, this appears to be a huge political payoff for unions for their unwavering support of the NDP. One of the few constituencies left, one of the few constituencies left that the NDP can still count on for support.

Mr. Speaker, just the leaders of the union, as the member from Swift Current said, because the workers, even unionized workers, are leaving the NDP. Everyone is leaving the NDP. Their fundraising capability is diminishing. So what do they do? They force more people into the unions to maintain their fundraising capability.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Bill doesn't appear to do anything much to help Saskatchewan businesses or workers. The only benefactors are the unions themselves — the union organizations.

Now some major construction companies have already mused publicly about leaving the province because of these changes. One of these is the Dominion Construction company.

Mr. Speaker, we have a story in the Regina *Leader-Post*, March 29, the year 2000. And it starts out by saying:

Some construction companies are threatening to leave the province if the government follows through on proposed amendments to The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act.

It goes on to say:

The Saskatchewan Construction Association, which represents both unionized and non-union contractors, is upset with the minister's response to the industry's concern about the proposed legislation.

This is the legislation that they had the nerve to introduce today. Mr. Speaker, a quotation:

"We didn't get a hearing from Crofford," said Brian

Barber, vice-president of Dominion Construction Co. in Regina, following a meeting with . . . (the minister) Tuesday.

Manley McLachlan, of the road construction association, is also quoted in here. And he says:

“(The minister) . . . didn’t seem to be interested in letting people determine their own status . . .”

The association’s director said:

. . . the amendments proposed by (the minister’s) . . . department would effectively impose unionization on employees of non-union construction firms.

Mr. Barber of Dominion Construction later on in the article added that:

. . . the owners of Dominion Construction may reconsider operating in Saskatchewan under the new legislation. “It’s a real concern. It limits our ability to work here.”

This is a quotation from Mr. Brian Barber.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that’s the last thing we need in Saskatchewan is for this minister to chase more businesses and more people out of the province of Saskatchewan. And yet that’s what Bill 59 would do. It would encourage more businesses and their workers to leave the province of Saskatchewan — away go more taxpayers.

And then what does the province have to do? They have to close more hospitals. They have to close more schools. They have to let more highways fall into disrepair.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that the Saskatchewan Party is adamantly opposed to this forced legislation, this forced unionization by the NDP. And we will be doing everything in our power to try to get the government to do what is right for the province and not simply what is right for their union contributors.

Mr. Speaker, we will stand up for the rights of workers who want to decide whether or not to become a part of the union through a fair and democratic process.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, the unions themselves could not convince workers to unionize — the government should not be forcing them. Mr. Speaker, we will stand up for the rights of employers and their employees in this province who have been operating very smoothly for 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, as was alluded to in question period by the Saskatchewan Party Labour critic, the member from Redberry Lake, the Minister of Labour just recently received a letter from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. It’s dated May 10, 2000. It is signed on behalf of their new incoming president, Mr. Casey Davis. And I’ll read just a few sentences from this letter. The new president says:

. . . the Government of Saskatchewan should not amend The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act in any way that would eliminate the “grand fathering” rights of unionized contractors to continue to operate their non-union subsidiaries.

And then later on in the letter Mr. Davis goes on to say:

Given the demographics of the province, the Provincial Chamber is also very concerned with the impact of your amendments on companies who have joint-ventured with First Nations organizations. In our meetings with First Nations representatives, they have related strong opposition to organized labour workplaces.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only is this an attack on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan — I mean they’re always attacking the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, we’re used to that, we see that everyday — now they’re also attacking business in Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well they do that every other day, but they’re attacking the workers in these businesses. A sign of an arrogant government that’s losing touch with the people of Saskatchewan and now we hear via the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce that they are attacking First Nations people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Where will this government end? When will they come to their senses? I don’t think they’ll come to their senses until the next election and then, as we all know, it’ll be far too late.

Mr. Speaker, this is just another Bill from an arrogant government which is desperately trying to do all its social engineering before their fateful meeting with the voters. What happens, Mr. Speaker? What happens when you have a government who loses contact with the people, becomes arrogant, and brings in legislation like this?

(1500)

Well isn’t it interesting. I have two headlines here from May 24 of this year. I think that’s today, isn’t it? May 24. That’s about as recent as you can get, Mr. Speaker.

First of all the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. What does the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* say? “Fewer summer jobs likely.” That’s the situation in Saskatchewan.

Saskatoon businesses will create considerably fewer jobs in the third quarter of 2000 than they did in the same period last year, according to a survey conducted by the human resources firm Manpower.

Farther in the article it says, and they quote Nicole Densham, Saskatoon branch manager for Manpower. She says:

“They are the weakest (numbers) we’ve seen in over a year, so that’s kind of scary.”

That’s what this young person says about the potential for summer jobs.

That’s the situation in NDP Saskatchewan. That’s today’s headlines in Saskatoon.



I also have the headlines from the *Calgary Herald* for today. The headline says "Forecast for summer jobs is hot." It says in the article:

In past years, SAIT student Heather DesRoches pounded the pavement struggling to find a summer job.

This year job hunting was a cinch. She handed out 10 resumes and got five job offers—all within one week.

Farther down in the article it says, they quote Tom Sakamoto, the general manager of ABC Country Restaurant. And he says:

"We're having a lot of problems hiring students because the unemployment rate is so low. Students can really pick and choose what they want to do."

As a result, Sakamoto said:

"We've had to be more lenient with requirements and pay higher wages than we previously expected."

Mr. Speaker, that's Calgary. In Calgary "summer jobs is hot"; in Saskatchewan "fewer summer jobs likely." Night and day, Mr. Speaker, all because of negative legislation, regressive legislation like Bill 59, the forced unionization Act.

Mr. Speaker, this government simply does not understand that it's because of legislation like this they barely, barely got back into power. Only with the help of a handful of Liberals did this government survive and put forward a majority government. And they don't seem to realize, according to the heckling over there, they have no idea that this kind of legislation is going to take them right out of the political scene in Saskatchewan, probably sooner than they think, and probably a lot farther down than they think, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the NDP will be thumped in the next election because of this arrogant attitude and the legislation they are bringing forward.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party will be opposed to Bill 59.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on this Bill at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Debate adjourned.

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 2000.

We're all familiar, Mr. Speaker, with the speed at which new methods of communication are becoming part of our society, and it's evident that these developments are having a significant

and growing impact on business and on our economy.

With the advent of new forms of communications such as the Internet and e-mail, paper is giving way to newer forms of electronic-based communications. The advent of new communication media and the increasing use of computers, means quite simply that in many cases there are no original paper documents. Rather the information contained in e-mail messages and attachments is being stored and reproduced electronically.

It's not clear, Mr. Speaker, the extent to which these developments can be fully accommodated by today's rules for the use of records in legal proceedings, these rules developed at a time when only paper records were used in court. The Uniform Law Conference of Canada approved the uniform Act in 1998, entitled the Uniform Electronic Evidence Act. The Act was designed to address the use of electronic records and legal proceedings. And, Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the Assembly today is modelled on that uniform Act.

These amendments allow modern information systems such as electronic imaging to produce records suitable for use in court without the requirement to produce the original paper records. The Bill has several other important features as well, Mr. Speaker. It provides a standard for computer records to be admitted in legal proceedings. It allows for an electronic record to take the place of an original record if the electronic system reliably stored and reproduced the record. It allows for industry-specific practices and standards respecting recording and storage to be used to assist in determining if such records should be admitted. And it allows for the use of affidavits in place of oral evidence to demonstrate the reliability of a record keeping system.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the amendments is to modernize legal roles regarding the admissibility and reliability of records recorded and stored by electronic systems. The law will be modernized, clarified, and harmonized, so that public and private sectors alike can make the best technical decisions possible about how to produce and keep records with a minimum of uncertainty about how their legal rights will be affected.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Evidence Act.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few comments in regards . . . regarding Bill No. 34. As the minister was indicating, there's no doubt that we've had significant change in areas of communication and certainly technology over the past number of years.

And I believe what the minister has been sharing with us today in regards to this piece of legislation, The Saskatchewan Evidence Amendment Act, 2000, it's a Bill as I understand it that will simplify the process of working with and providing in many cases evidence and certainly using electronic links and records in courtrooms or in areas where large volumes of paper may have been needed before, in fact probably carrying in armfuls of paper to use as evidence, which can be sometimes somewhat tedious.

And when I look at my records, it takes me a while to go through my papers; whereas when I ever get around to really understanding the computer, I'll probably get to finding the information I need a lot more quickly. And I think that's what the minister in essence is saying here, is it speeds up the process of being able to have at your fingertips the type of evidence that you need or access to information that is necessary, certainly in the process of court.

The one thing we would certainly be concerned about, and I trust that this was what the legislation intends to do, is to guarantee that the rights of individuals are not interfered with or not . . . that they're all respected; that the evidence as it's presented is going to be presented factually, that it will certainly confirm what is on paper, that it will not be a means of just overstepping some of the evidence that a person may have or may be able to use but is not accessible. Or in fact, Mr. Speaker, because of electronic means, certainly what the electronic processes that are used are only as valuable as the information that is stored in those . . . whether it's computers or laptop computers or whatever, the person who stores that information.

And we trust that this piece of legislation indeed makes sure and sees to it that any time evidence is used electronically, that it has been gained appropriately and that it is certainly the proper evidence and is the truthful evidence that would be presented, rather than having to be challenged at a later date.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having said that and anticipating that this is where we're going, but wanting to review the legislation just a little more closely to see that it meets all these requirements, I now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Why is the hon. member from Melfort on his feet?

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — With leave, to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recognized an hon. guest sitting behind the bar on the government side of the House, Mr. Gordon MacMurchy. It might seem strange why I'd be introducing a former, distinguished member of the Blakeney administration. As a matter of fact, when I graduated from university and had my very first job as a teacher in this province, Mr. MacMurchy was the chairman of the school district that gave me my very first job.

And in return, I taught two of his sons, Mark and Gordon Jr. And at the volunteers' award ceremony the other day, I had to talk to Mr. MacMurchy and see that the experience of me teaching his sons didn't have any lasting ill effects on their well-being and careers and their future. And he assured me that it had not and that they still speak fondly of me, at least up until the time that I got into politics.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to welcome Mr. MacMurchy back into the Chamber.

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

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 49 — The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2000

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I certainly would like to as well welcome Mr. MacMurchy on behalf of the government. It's nice to see him here in the Assembly today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2000. This Act contains the first set of substantive amendments to The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997 that was passed by this Assembly in 1997. Members may recall that the 1997 law was a complete rewrite of what was The Highways and Transportation Act and The Department of Highways and Transportation Act.

The former legislation had been on the books for close to half a century, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Over the years a number of provisions had become outdated or unworkable.

The 1997 law attempted to update transportation legislation in the province. We have established a legislative framework for the transportation partnerships fund. We set a framework for ensuring that people who cause overweight vehicles to damage the road surface are held accountable for their actions.

Since the passage of the Act, Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation staff and our legal advisers have indicated a number of relatively minor changes should be made. Several of the changes indicated are the result of oversights in the 1997 rewrite.

In Committee of the Whole, I will indicate which amendment changes are essentially of a housekeeping nature. Today there are a few amendments that I will highlight for you.

This Bill ensures that the department is not held unnecessarily liable for injuries of users of highway rights of way, even if they are operating on the authority of a permit. We will ensure to the best of our ability that users of the rights of way are not placed in unsafe situations.

Our officials have suggested there is a possibility of the department and, obviously, taxpayers' liability under the current law. The amendment addresses this concern. Of course we would remain liable if we acted in any way to deliberately injure a user of the right of way, be it a trail pedestrian user or an off-road vehicle user. The current provision in the law dealing with the tender awards is problematic for the effective administration of our construction program.

There are circumstances in which a contract should not be awarded to the lowest bidder other than for reasons of expediency.

This Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, authorizes the minister to seek Lieutenant Governor in Council approval in cases in which it is in the public interest to award a tender to someone other than the lowest bidder.

In general, we are satisfied in most cases with the awarding of a tender to the lowest bidder. However, there has been instances when we may not wish to follow normal procedure.

If a contractor's performance has not been satisfactory in the past, we may not wish to award a tender even if the contractor's bid is the lowest. Relying on the word expedient, may not be sufficient to have the Lieutenant Governor in Council approve awarding to another party. Adding the reference to public interest will in our view help resolve any concerns in this area.

The way we organize transportation in Saskatchewan is changing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and more and more we are seeking to work with municipal governments in co-managing our road system. This new Bill enhances our ability to work with local municipalities in this area. The Bill provides that any move to devolve ministerial responsibilities must occur only with the agreement of affected municipalities.

There is a new clause in this Bill to help with partnering agreements with private sector owners of parts of transportation system. This has become necessary as several public improvements such as airports and railways are becoming partially and/or fully privately owned and operated.

(1515)

Our legal advisers have indicated the current provisions may not cover these cases. For example, our loan program to provide financial assistance to producer groups wishing to establish short-line railways by lines from CNCP (Canadian National and Canadian Pacific) would not be covered by the current law.

On the other hand if a short-line company constructed a new line, the department has authority to make agreements under the existing provisions in section 4. The amendment removes this anomaly and gives the department flexibility to enter into these types of partnerships.

The section of the transportation partnerships fund has been rewritten for the sake of clarity. We have removed what could be seen as a reverse onus provision in shipper responsibility. This reflects input from stakeholders whom we've surveyed in 1999. The provision has not yet been proclaimed, but I anticipate bringing a recommendation for proclamation to my cabinet colleagues later this year.

I would therefore be pleased, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also to answer any questions during the committee stage of this Bill.

And now I would move second reading of The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2000.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can appreciate why the minister is coming forward with this Bill given the state of our highways in the province of Saskatchewan at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I talk about highways, certainly just over the past long weekend, and I'm sure many government members found the same thing, that when people were heading out to the resort areas to enjoy a bit of time and relaxation, the unfortunate part is they had to deal with a number of highway networks that at this time are in certainly disrepair.

And given that consideration and the calls that have come to our office, I can also understand why the minister and why the department are taking another look at liability, and certainly for off-road vehicles.

However, the minister does have a point. When you're talking of highway construction, you're talking of off road; you've got to appreciate the fact that the consumer at the same time needs to respect the difficulties that are incurred when your highway's under construction or there's road maintenance and what have you, and have to respect the fact that there are individuals, highway maintenance crews and construction crews, who are doing their best to try and upgrade the deplorable state of our highways.

And therefore it certainly wouldn't be appropriate for the crews and the department to really have to worry about a person driving down one of these roads who may find themselves in a situation where there's damage to a vehicle or what have you, and then blame the construction crew when they . . . if the proper signage is put out there and if people are warned in advance of the fact that there's construction underway.

However if a person's proceeding down a road that isn't properly marked and does significant damage to their vehicle, we would hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that individual or those individuals will be able to go to the department and point out the problems that they've faced and the department will act accordingly.

And we certainly believe that that certainly hasn't been changed by the legislation, but we'll follow a little closer as we get into further debate in regards to The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2000, Bill No. 49.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister talked about hiring contractors and suggested that they have to change the terminology because they're . . . In the past they have attempted to use the lowest bid or tender that's always . . . that has been brought forward, and at times they've found that possibly the lowest bid was not always the best bid or possibly coming from a contractor that they really had a lot of confidence in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would think, if the minister wanted to, the minister basically just has to say that they would award tenders to the lowest qualified bidder.

That way then they would still have the opportunity to take that lowest bid. They know that that contractor submitting that bid is a well-thought-of and a reputable contractor who has done good work in the past and that would give them that opportunity and that ability. So that they would be able extend the dollars that are available and build or construct or upgrade more highways in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest to the minister we

don't want to see the government moving away from the lowest qualified bidder. We do want to . . . we also though want the . . . and respect the fact that I believe the government, the department, are telling us that they want to have the ability to hire the best and the most qualified individual contractor to do the road work and the grading.

And having said that I can appreciate that, driving down No. 1, east of Indian Head, and I get a lot of complaints on that. That road's been under construction for about two years or two and a half years and people today are beginning to wonder whether or not we'll ever see that phase of construction completed given the state and the way the process and the work has been proceeding.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there are definitely some changes needed. But we, on this side of the Assembly we would hope that the government would indeed look very closely at continuing to take that lowest, but take the lowest qualified bidder on any of the projects that they're putting forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well the minister talked about short-line rail and there's no doubt in this province, and with the number of commodities and the miles that we need to move heavy commodities, that we need to take a serious look at it. And that's why many community groups and farm groups are asking for the opportunity to form short-line rail companies and start getting some of that heavy load off of our highways system. Because as a result of the heavy B-trains and what have you moving down our roads and more and more traffic on our roads, it is becoming more difficult to maintain and keep those roads upgraded.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to look at that clause very closely and see exactly where the minister is heading because I know many groups across this province would like to have the opportunity. And I for one feel that for far too long we've allowed the railways to dictate the policy when the rail network that was built across this country was built by taxpayers and by governments, and the rail companies were allowed to run on it.

Yes, the companies put money into it, but I know even just in our area, an upgrade about 15 years ago, all of the money was federal money into that rail bed. And there isn't a person around there who wants to see that rail company now just abandon the line and rip it up. They're saying we put the money in; if somebody else wants to put units on that line and use the line to transport heavy products, they should have that opportunity.

So I think there's, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's an interesting debate that we can get into in regards to some of the changes that the minister is talking of in this Bill.

Having said that, I think we need to look at it a little more carefully. Because what the minister was saying, that the intent of this Bill is to change some of the areas of the '97 legislation that the department felt and his office, or the minister's office, felt were not quite meeting the need of today, and we feel as well we need to look at very carefully.

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

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 42 — The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2000**

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, growth of the provincial livestock sector offers our farm families here in Saskatchewan a tremendous opportunity. I might add the opportunity to add strength and stability to many of our rural communities and to our rural economy.

As a result, our government — and I'm sure the members of the opposition — will do whatever we can to encourage the expansion of livestock production in our province. More livestock production in Saskatchewan means more jobs, more wealth, and more local markets for producers of Saskatchewan feed grains in all areas of the province.

We believe the best way to encourage this expansion is to work in partnership with the leaders of the industry, to develop a regulatory framework that is both effective and responsive to the sector's needs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998 is a case in point. This legislation administers a check off that is used to fund research and promotion, obviously the cornerstones of a vibrant and growing industry.

Under the current structure of the Act we collect \$2 from the sale of every animal in the province. One dollar of each of the two goes towards research and development in Saskatchewan and the other is used to fund the industry promotion at a national level, both at home, abroad, through a new and exciting national agency.

Since we began collecting the second dollar in August of 1998, Saskatchewan cattle producers have put together more than \$3 million for injection into additional national incentives.

Unfortunately the new national agency meant to administer the funds is not yet in place and that means the funds are unavailable under the current legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, that means our industry faces a gap in its ongoing commitment to funding of the national promotion, research, and marketing initiatives.

Saskatchewan's cattle industry has told us that that is unacceptable. They have requested and received our co-operation in changing the province's check-off legislation to free up those funds. Therefore the amendments we propose to the cattle marketing Act reflects that scheme and that co-operation. They have and are fully in approval of the changing that are being proposed.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask members of the Assembly, members of the opposition, to support these amendments and I ask that we move quickly through second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first question I have is what's the minister taking out of our pockets now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at deductions of any kind — whether it's cattle, whether it's livestock, or whether it's grain — certainly producers, right away their ears perk up and they say, okay, exactly what am I going to be taxed on now. I'm paying enough already.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the minister is saying certainly has . . . there seems to be good logic in regards to the need for a check off. And if I'm not mistaken, I believe the cattle marketing check off as it is today is a voluntary check off and I think that's the way it should continue to be. Producers can make application to have the check off refunded if they so wish.

However, having said that, there's no doubt that the livestock sector in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, currently is doing very well. Although if you look at the cycles, say in agriculture, if livestock is doing well it tends to . . . grain on the other hand tends not to be doing as well or vice versa.

So for a lot of producers, many producers have chosen, and we're seeing even today more and more producers are again looking at, diversifying their operations by adding livestock to the mix. And as a result of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it certainly is important that we do take the time to do the research, so that we can assist our producers in finding better ways to maximize the opportunities they have within their industry, within the sector — their sector — and certainly to assist them in some of the marketing and the farming operations that they face on a daily basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it certainly would be important as well that we take note of whether or not this piece of legislation may have a problem in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations; I think that's something we need to look at very carefully. I think it's certainly imperative that we check with the industry to have their feedback.

And Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, when we talk about legislation such as this where you're going to producers for marketing fees, you certainly want to make sure that the fees that they're contributing are actually going into research dollars that they are led to believe that is happening with the money.

And as the minister had indicated, certainly there have been . . . the federal government has reneged on their responsibility of setting . . . setting us . . . or building this national cattle marketing agency.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, it would be important for us at this time to take the time to review this legislation a lot more carefully. And having said that, I now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 3 — The Health**

**Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join in this debate regarding Bill No. 3, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999. I was interested in speaking to this Bill because it deals with two subjects that the NDP have proven itself to be completely incompetent dealing with — health care and trade union issues.

This session of the legislature is only the latest example of the government being totally out of touch with the average Saskatchewan resident when it comes to either health care or labour issues.

(1530)

On the one hand, we have a health care system that is falling apart and the members opposite seemingly don't have the first clue in how to deal with it. One day we were told that they would throw themselves in front of a truck to save a publicly-funded system. The next day we hear the Minister of Health telling Saskatchewan residents they're going to have to start thinking about what things in our health care system they're willing to pay for.

One day we hear the members opposite say the problem with the health care system is simply one of money. They contend that simply throwing more money to the system, Mr. Speaker, will restore it to the state it was prior to the NDP's disastrous health forum program. And then the next day we hear members of the same party saying that the problems can't be solved with money.

Mr. Speaker, one day we hear the Premier saying the health care system across the country must be reviewed to ensure that all the funding that is possible is getting to front-line services and not being wasted on useless administration bureaucracy. And the next day that same speaker comes out against the Saskatchewan Party for proposing to hold such a review right here in Saskatchewan where the health care system has deteriorated badly at the same time we're spending more money than we ever have in our history on health care.

One day the Premier says he's a sworn enemy of the so-called two-tier health care and will do anything to stop its progress. The next day he hires Harvey McLane — a man who has abdicated for two-tier health care when he was a member of the legislature — to advise the government on health care policy. Suddenly two-tier Harvey, as the members I'm told opposite used to call him, looked pretty good to the Premier even though he did not look good to the people of Arm River.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly, the Red Earth Elementary School, grades 8 to 12 sitting in your . . . in the east gallery, accompanied by their teachers, Marcel McKay, Bryon Young, Candice Meston, Sandra Trohak, Barry Bear, Florence Koronoski, Roy Rowlett, and Judy Mahoney.

And it's particularly nice to see someone from so far away here in Regina to visit us today. And I'll be spending some time with them later.

So I would ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming the group from Red Earth.

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Arm River. Order. I apologize to the hon. member for Arm River. It's my pleasure to recognize the Minister of Northern Affairs.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the guests as well.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the member to also welcome the teachers as well as the students from Red Earth. And . . . (inaudible) . . . enough . . . or always of course when we talk about Red Earth, we say Ka Meegoskiwugak, which is a name that we give to . . . that we call Red Earth.

But we also say in regards to the fellow members, welcome — ta wow.

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

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

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### **Bill No. 3 — The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999 (continued)**

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's our pleasure to carry on debate on Bill No. 3.

On one day the Premier says that the Liberal leader will bring a private hair . . . private health care clinics if he's let near the levers of power. And the next day that Premier puts that same Liberal leader in cabinet in order to restore the majority of the voters this province took away from the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are just a few examples of the complete lack of direction being offered by the members opposite when it comes to health care. With the lack of leadership we've seen so far from the members opposite, it's little wonder they've lost their majority in last fall's election

and will lose much more in the next election.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, Bill 3 simply extends the provisions of the recommendations adopted from the Dorsey report in 1996. This of course was another heavy-handed NDP law that forced health care workers, who were already in unions, into different unions.

The many more health care workers who chose not to be in unions were forced to, were forced to join by the members opposite when the original Bill was adopted.

That is typical of the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If . . . disagree with what the NDP wants, those members simply force, force them through legislation. It's the same thing we've seen over and over again since 1991. The all-knowing, all-seeing government doing things against people's will because the government knows best.

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the original Dorsey legislation reduced the number of bargaining units from 538 to 45. This was done we were told to bring about better bargaining in the health care system, more labour harmony. Well there's nothing wrong with that, but of course it simply didn't work, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And it didn't work not because reducing the number of bargaining units was necessarily a bad thing; it didn't work because of the NDP's attitude. The way they approached this legislation was the same way they approach everything: act now, talk later. Their idea of consolation is to send concerned parties copies of the Bill about 15 minutes after they've rammed it through the legislature.

So of course after the original legislation passed there was plenty of sore feelings throughout this province among health care workers who did not appreciate the government dictating which union they should belong to or whether they should belong to a union at all.

But throughout the whole debate, we simply heard the NDP tell us that this was a good thing because it would bring about labour harmony in the health care field.

Flash forward a couple of years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what did we find? Did we find this has posed labour harmony? Did we find a better health care system because of the government's tinkering with bargaining units? Did these changes cure the terrible working conditions that our health workers often find themselves in? Of course the answer to all this, the answer to all of these questions is a resounding no.

What we found was health care workers continuing to be frustrated by the working conditions. We found a health care system that seemed ready to come apart at the seams due mainly to the NDP's health reform policies which failed miserably. And of course we found the province in the middle of one of the largest and one of the longest nurses' strikes in Saskatchewan's history.

I'm sure the Associate Minister of Health, the former nurses' union president, remembers that very well. I believe the very first vote she cast in this place as an MLA was to legislate the

members of her own union back to work.

That was typical, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Instead of taking the concerns of nurses seriously and dealing with the issues, such as working conditions; the NDP simply chose to ignore them and legislate them back to work.

In fact, I believe that party who likes to think of it as the so-called party of the workers has brought in two back, back-to-back, work orders in the last year. That's a funny way to treat a friend, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It seems to me the NDP's friends don't extend much further down than the union leadership — the Associate Minister of Health for example. The actual workers who are affected by the NDP's heavy-handed approach to the government have a very different view of the members opposite than the Barb Byers of the world do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So that's how far we got with this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Health care got worse, and labour strife in the health care sector got worse as the Associate Minister of Health will surely agree. Just another typical day at the office for the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The well-laid plans fell apart right before their eyes. Kind of like last year's election, it seems to me.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a bit more about the NDP's labour policy since it is related very closely to the provisions of Bill No. 3. And once again, just lately we've seen that this government is more concerned about those people who organize unions than they are with the actual workers in the unions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now have a situation where a very major employer in this province is thinking about leaving the province, taking those jobs elsewhere, because this government refuses to bring about a level playing field in Saskatchewan when it comes to labour policy and labour trade . . . and labour and trade union policy. Right now we have a situation in this province where workers are asked to decide on whether or not to form a union with only half the information before them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, union organizers have the right to come into this province, to pressure workers, to woo workers, and to tell workers how badly they're being treated and how they must form a union.

However, the law of this province now precludes employers, the people who sign the paycheques, to tell their own workers the other side of the story. They're not allowed to tell the workers that a union may force job reductions or even relocations that we've seen in the last instance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it too much to ask that the workers have all the information before they make these important decisions? Apparently the NDP believe that it is too much to ask. Just like they believe it's unreasonable to think the workers making these decisions should be given the right to a secret ballot.

Now how they could be against that is beyond me, but the NDP oppose extending a secret ballot to workers when they're deciding whether or not to certify. The secret ballot, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the most fundamental foundation to democracy, yet

the NDP oppose giving the right of the secret ballot to workers in this province.

So let's sum it up. The NDP is against the freedom of speech in the workplace. They're against allowing workers access to all available information when they're deciding to form a union. And they're against granting workers the fundamental right of a secret ballot. And those members like to pass themselves off as friends of the workers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That must take a lot of guts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all likelihood we will supporting Bill 3 as it would cause even more . . . (inaudible) . . . now to undo what the NDP did in 1996. However, we are hoping to see more from this government by way of both health care policy and labour policy, because theirs has failed miserably in the last nine years. Their health care policy has resulted in deteriorating service: lineups are longer, waiting lists are longer, the deficits that the provincial government has shifted to the health care districts are getting larger.

With what happened in Yorkton, I wonder what the people in Yorkton think about the NDP's performance in the health care that they've had to replace their board. Probably about the same as most other people think. The NDP has failed miserably when it comes to health care.

And they haven't fared much better in the labour front. Employers leaving the province, workers losing their jobs, back-to-work legislation on a regular basis. In other words, failure for this government on the labour front too. It makes one wonder what the members opposite can do right, Mr. Speaker.

At any rate we will continue to consult on this legislation. For now I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

## Bill No. 2

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No 2 — The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. A great privilege today to rise to talk about Bill No. 2, The Animal Identification Amendment Act. And after the last hour or two, a couple of hours of dealing with labour issues, this will be a real refreshing change talking about animal identification.

Many livestock producers have great concerns with the direction the government is taking with this document. They have some serious questions about animal identification and concerns about the lack of direction from this government on this issue in the past.

And I think all we have to do is look around at members on our side and start looking at the number of members on our side that do actually raise, produce cattle, and they have some grave concerns. You know, we can poll a number of the producers in the province, and there are many, many cattle producers. And we talk to them and we talk to members on our side, and they

have some grave concerns.

And I guess . . . you know it would be very interesting to go to a caucus meeting on the opposite side and see how many can actually talk about animal identification with any sort of intelligence. I mean how many times have they been out branding cattle? I know a member on our side is going to be out there next week, going through this very process with his herd.

And so there are some grave concerns with the whole process of animal identification. Many farmers are telling us that we still have yet to come up with a sound program. And I think, just from my own experience in agriculture and on the farm, and I think, although I haven't been in cattle production directly . . . When I left high school I moved out to Alberta and worked on a cattle feed lot for a couple of years.

(1545)

And I realize that there can be a lot of problems with certain programs that are implemented. And I'll speak about grain farming and some of the different programs that have been put into place.

People are hesitant out there to buy into a new program. When we hear government coming out and saying here's a new program for you, most everyone of us will stand back and say, what's it going to be now, because we've been through so many different programs that have been ineffective, that haven't worked, that have been pulled out from under us, and things like that.

So it's a real concern when we hear government come to us and say, here's a sound program and it's going to work and you should buy into it. And we're finding a lot of producers that aren't ready to do that, especially the producer from Arm River, who's been through a lot of those programs and realizes, after a great speech that he's just given, but also realizes how concerning it is when you get into the animal identification and whether the program is going to work or not.

Farmers have questions about who'll be the licenser of the program; how far-ranging it would be; who would be enforcing it; and exactly how would it work. A lot of the questions that I think need to be answered before we go any further with this.

I've heard a couple of people talk at one of the ratepayers' meeting in south Qu'Appelle where a person talked about this very program — the national program of identifying cattle and why it would be such a good idea. And it was interesting after the ratepayers' meeting to wander around and talk to actual producers because that's who it's really going affect is the actual producers.

And they were asking these very questions. Who is going to enforce it? Who is going to be in charge of it? How was the program going to work and things like that. And there was just so many questions that have yet to have been answered that we need to do a lot further investigation and study into how this program would work.

And a lot of concerns about costs. As we were going through some of the different Bills that were introduced today, I listened

to the Minister of Agriculture talk about another check-off program for cattle producers. And it was really interesting to hear him talk. He said, well it's only two dollars — a dollar to go to research and a dollar to go to marketing.

But then what about this one? This is just another one. I mean, the minimum that we feel that this program is going to cost and what was talked about on the opposite side too, was another dollar per animal. Well you know, you can one dollar it and one dollar it and one dollar it and one dollar it, and when you say one dollar it doesn't mean very much per head. But when you do a program like the Minister of Agriculture just mentioned, when you add a program like this, it adds up.

And I think if there's one thing that we've noticed in agriculture both on the grain side of it, grain sector, and in the livestock sector, is the erosion of our net — our profitability. And it's just slowly being eroded away, whether it's freight rates which we talked about last week or the week before, whether it's crop insurance, whether it's animal identification, whether it's a check-off for livestock, people in rural Saskatchewan are sick and tired or seeing their net . . . any sort of a profit line eroding.

And it doesn't come just bang, with one program. It doesn't come with one issue. It comes with a number of them. And this is just one more of those issues. So they have some real concerns as to the cost of it. It may only be a dollar, but a dollar is a dollar, and it all adds up per head.

I think a number of other producers are really concerned with the fact that they do go through this program and their livestock is tagged and they have it identified properly, but most producers, and in fact I think there hasn't been a producer that has come to me that I have talked to that has said, there's a fail-proof way of identifying animals.

You know, I think all you have to do is go to a feedlot some place where there's a number of cattle tagged with ear tags, and it wouldn't be uncommon to find tags on the ground, in the chutes, and wherever else. And now where did that tag come from? You've bought into this program, you've cost . . . it costs you another dollar per head. You've bought into it.

You send your animal to market, and somewhere in transportation the tag has come off — in the lot before it goes to market the tag has come off, in the processing yard the tag has come off. How do you know? And there hasn't been a producer that I have talked to yet, including members on our side, that say there's foolproof way. And I think members opposite feel there is, and maybe there is a foolproof way of tagging certain animals. But we haven't heard of it ourselves.

When I was at that ratepayers' meeting in south Qu'Appelle it was, there was a lady there speaking on the very national program. And they had the symbol. It was very nice symbol and they had the design of the different ear tags that one could buy. But very seldom did she ever get into the point that it's 100 per cent fail proof, because it isn't.

So there's problems regardless of whether it's an ear tag or a brisket tag or whatever you want to go to. There are problems. And that's where people get into some real grave concern. Whose responsibility is it if that animal has changed hands



three or four times in its life cycle? Whose responsibility is it when the tag comes off and then there's no background on it?

I mean I realize the whole point of the animal identification program, and especially the international program and we're starting to export our cattle around the world especially down to the States; if they want to make sure that there's some guaranteed history on that animal, it would be a crime to see anything that happened like in Great Britain with mad cow disease and things like that. And I mean that's where this is all . . . that's the genesis of all this. This is where it's all starting from.

But I don't know if we've ever got to the point in our province, and especially nationally, that we can guarantee identification from calf to slaughter. And that's where our producers are so concerned. Not to mention the cost — it's going to cost you more; not to mention perhaps the bookkeeping — who's going to be the enforcer of such a program?

And so it's really disconcerting when we hear the members opposite at times say, oh, just push it through; I mean it's something that's good. And we say yes, well, it's maybe as far as theory-wise, but is it practical and can it be done.

Because one thing that I have noticed more than anything else standing on this side and talking to different issues, is the lack of common sense coming from that side. You know, and it just . . . I agree maybe the theory is right. The theory is right, and you write it down with a pen and paper and it sounds really, really good, and then common sense it just doesn't apply.

And I think some of the debate going on today already about some of the labour legislation, you know where is the common sense to that. And we've really, really failed to see it. In fact, the minister keeps saying, I don't understand, every time after she's done answering a question, and I truly believe that now, is that she doesn't understand and the common sense is gone.

And so that's one reason why we wanted to have a little more time to look at this Bill and to research this Bill to see if there are things that can be amended and looked at so that the program, although in theory is right, but as far as the dollars and cents of it we have some concerns with that.

As far as the guaranteeing that the identification will be there from calf to slaughter is a real concern. And probably even bigger and even better than that is the fact that the government is on the other side saying this is a great program, listen to us, believe us, here's another program, heaped on agriculture producers. And believe me agriculture producers have had enough of this government's programs heaped on them and I think this is just another one.

So with that, Mr. Deputy, Deputy Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on Bill No. 2, The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

### Bill No. 9

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed

motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 9 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to spend a moment or two and discuss some of the items that I've found when I reviewed this particular Bill No. 9, The Child and Family Services Act.

Actually the amendments that I've found in there have a lot of positive things to them. And I would like to suggest that the changing of some of these amendments to include an extension of the time when young people who still need assistance after the age of 18 are in fact being looked after under these amendments.

And I notice that some of the clauses will apply now to people up to the age of 21 if that, in fact, was needed in order for them to obtain the requirements for further education or assistance in training, or for people that are experiencing some difficulty or some disability, some impairment, and require some additional protection or some programs.

I think all that is very positive. And I noticed also that maybe this is very timely because from my experience earlier in the school system and talking at some length to people in school divisions, I notice that a lot of the problems that are generally picked up and looked after by Social Services, for instance, or other departments of government are being thrust into the education system. And teachers and administrators in the school are expected then to be able to try and accommodate those students, and in their way try to not only to accommodate them and work them into the mainstream but try and solve some of the basic problem.

It's very commendable, but it's not exactly the right solution. And I think some of these amendments do in fact go in that direction.

I have some caution though and some concern in terms of these particular amendments. If we start down that road of trying to add services where we think are needed, I'm really concerned that maybe some of these young people will continue to fall through the cracks and not get the services needed. Because, as you know, there's an increasing demand placed on our young people. I certainly realize that from having completed raising my family, and now I'm enjoying the grandchildren as they come along and I'm watching them develop.

There is, there's certainly a lot of opportunity for these young people to come up against situations and a lot of stresses in their particular life that we never thought was possible when we were growing up. The world is becoming much more complex and the stress for these young people to compete in our system is becoming increasingly onerous on these young people. And particularly, if these young people are experiencing some disability and need some special concern, the world, I'm sure, must become increasingly more and more frustrated with them.

Fortunately a lot of our young people are very capable of adapting to these changes, probably much more so than certainly I would have been at that age.

However, the sophistication is putting so much stress on our young people that I think there's an increasing number — at least we feel there's an increasing number — falling away and into the cracks and not getting adequate service.

So I would encourage that we try to move away from allowing the . . . or requiring the schools particularly to try and solve these problems, and in fact having Social Services or commitments under this particular Act try to amend those problems.

I guess my other concern then becomes the, who is going to be able to do this work? And I know we have permissive legislation in these amendments, but who in fact is going to be able to do that causes me some concern. Because as you know, the systems and the programs that we have in place right now are completely stressed in terms of their own ability to accommodate any additional new pressures that are being put on them. And I have some concern.

For instance, criticism that we just heard recently in the annual report of the Children's Advocate highlighted some — very graphically — some very distinct problems in Social Services and some of the problems that they were encountering already. If we are trying to direct more of these problems and these programs to those kind of services, I'm afraid we're going to overload those facilities. And in fact the services offered now appear to be somewhat underfunded and incapable of coping with the numbers that they have there already.

Another concern that I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is although we have permissive legislation in this Act, my concern would be that how are these young people, how are they going to be identified; who is going to identify them? There's no mention of the subjectivity in trying to allocate who is going to require extra service, who is not.

It gives me some concern that this very subjective judgment is going to maybe be biased toward . . . maybe it'll be handicapped, maybe it'll be learning difficulty, maybe it'll be physical. Those kinds of subjective evaluations give me some concerns because I don't know under what conditions, I don't know what circumstances, who will be doing the deciding.

Those kind of things are not addressed in the amendments. Hopefully they'll be coming forward in any regulation so that it's transparent and everybody can see that it's going to be fair and just for these young people.

I can't overstress how important it is for all young people to be developed to their potential. And I think that's the underlying factor in this Bill as I read it. And I have to commend the minister for trying to do that. And if that's the intent, I think that's exactly what's needed.

All young people certainly have potential. And the ability to direct these people, whether it's through the minister's ability under his portfolio to do it, is yet to be seen. And I really think that it's an important aspect and I would encourage us to move forward. But at this time I would move adjournment of the debate.

Debate adjourned.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Agriculture and Food Vote 1

**The Chair:** — Before I call the first subvote, I wish to remind committee members that the Department of Agriculture was last here on April 10, and having said that, I'll invite the minister to re-introduce his officials before I call the first subvote.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the committee members who are present today. But with me I have Ernie Spencer, who is seated to my right, the assistant deputy minister of Ag and Food, and to my left, Hal Cushon, director of policy program and development branch. Behind me, directly behind me, Susie Miller, assistant deputy minister; and also behind me, Laurier Donais, senior manager, financial service administration, and also Ross Johnson, manager of operation service and administration; and of course from Crop Insurance, Doug Matthies.

#### Subvote (AG01)

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and your officials. We wanted to start today by discussing some of the issues surrounding crop insurance.

Mr. Minister, let's start by . . . I wonder if you could provide for the House some indication of what level of take up there's been in crop insurance this year. There's been a number of changes, many of which . . . in fact I think all of which we agreed with in terms of the changes — most of them were our ideas to begin with, I think — the changes that were announced.

Mr. Minister, I hope we are seeing an increase in the take up of crop insurance as it becomes more affordable. And that's an issue for producers out there, as you know — the affordability of the program in areas where they're not normally subjected to crop insurance concerns.

And as you move further north, as an example, in Saskatchewan where drought isn't as prevalent, crop insurance, it doesn't have the same breakdown of the number of producers. And I wonder if you'd provide for the Assembly a breakdown by risk area of the percentages of farmers who have taken up the Crop Insurance program, and a global number for the province?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — To the member opposite, I don't have the . . . by risk area. I think there's . . . Doug, 16 or 17 of them in the province, but I will get that for you.

On the issue of how many farmers have contracts, about 75 per cent of the farm community have contracts although they wouldn't have all of their crops covered. So it's a little bit difficult to follow. Because while they . . . 75 per cent have contracts, not all of those would have 100 per cent of their crops covered.

So about 75 per cent have contracts; in the area of 60, 65 per cent of all the crops are covered. And . . . of the acreage. And that's up about 2 or 3 per cent, maybe as much as 5 per cent, but in the area between probably 2 and 4 per cent increase from last

year.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Have you or your department or Crop Insurance officials done any kind of an analysis of the reasons why we don't seem to get any higher than that? I know we . . . it bounces back and forth a little bit but goes up at various times and then it starts backing off, generally backing off as prices improve, increasing in coverage as prices seem to decline.

And I . . . Make no mistake about it; I support the Crop Insurance program and have been a participant of the program for a long time. I think it's a good program. The problems that are associated with it though are some producers feel that the level of premium is still too high for the potential amount of coverage that they may have available to them.

So I'm wondering whether your department ever looks at it and makes some sort of an assessment or an analysis of the program to determine how you can encourage more producers to be a part of it. Because obviously as the program, as the insurance program grows in size and the amount of acres that are covered, it increases the amount of . . . essentially the amount of support available to agriculture and reduces the amount of risk for farmers.

And included in that analysis, I'm wondering whether you look at farm size in any respect with this. Does it make any difference if the farm is larger or smaller in terms of the take up of insurance? Does it make any difference in terms of a diversified operation in terms of crop mix? Does that impact upon the likelihood of looking at crop insurance? Does it make any difference in terms of livestock diversification as well?

I think we've . . . What I'm suggesting, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, is I think what we need to do is really get down to determining why it is that some people move into the Crop Insurance program — which I think is a very good program — and why some people don't accept crop insurance.

And we would be willing certainly to co-operate in terms of trying to address this problem. Because as we all know, the concern that non-agriculture producers have when it comes to support programs for agriculture, particularly ad hoc programs, they look at it and they say, well why didn't they cover themselves for disaster in terms of a crop insurance program.

And you know as well as I know, Mr. Minister, there's some very good reasons for that. A lot of the problems associated with agriculture right now are not production-related concerns, they are price-related concerns.

So it's with that in mind that I ask these general direction questions about the program. And I want your thoughts and your departments' and the Crop Insurance officials' thoughts on it as to how we can address that concern.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — If I could for the member opposite, Mr. Chairman, let him know that . . . I guess statistics are always difficult to interpret or maybe very easy to interpret depending on what you're trying to accomplish. But in Saskatchewan we have the second highest percentage take up of crop insurance of any province in Canada, second only to

Manitoba.

And the analysis that has been done — and I think it's a good question based on the size of farms — whether or not larger farmers take a . . . are more prone to take up crop insurance or less, and the same with small farmers. In fact in all categories, the percentage seems to be almost the same, and go up and down in all categories at the same time. And I think in — Doug, what year was it as low as 55 per cent? — 1996, it went as low as 55 per cent and has bounced back up to 75 per cent.

The one interesting connection that there seems to be to whether or not a farm family takes up crop insurance is whether or not they are diversified. And it seems like they will use the diversification into cattle, or hogs, or other small business as a self-insurance. And we do see a correlation between percentage of farmers who may have hogs or cattle, fewer of those people choose to take crop insurance, which I think logically may be explained by the fact that they have a more stable income and will take their money that they would normally pay on crop insurance and inject it into the agricultural diversification side, whether that be hogs or cattle. And we do see some fairly significant change on that basis.

(1615)

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you. So it's not, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, it's not an issue of affordability then; in a lot of cases it's an issue of just simple choice. Or these folks that aren't inclined to take it are sort of rugged individualists and aren't inclined to involve themselves in government-related programs. How do you determine those kinds of things?

I think it . . . the reason why I think it important is, is as I said earlier, we've got to develop into the future, not only move further along in terms of how we put together a good, affordable crop insurance program, but it makes connection of course to the whole issue of safety nets in themselves as to how we can develop a safety net into the future. And there are a lot of people feel that the crop insurance program combined with a revenue insurance program might be the way that we can look at a long-term safety net.

So I'm interested in your thoughts, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — It's always a little surprising to me, especially this year after all of the angst that we had last fall and over the winter with the problems associated with agriculture and what was obviously a pretty severe cost-price squeeze that farmers found themselves in with the costs of . . . input costs, fuel and fertilizer and chemicals going up, and the product that they were selling, at least in part, for grains and oilseeds going down. Although you would know as an active farmer that some of the pulse crops actually last year was a pretty good year.

But one of the trends that we follow very closely are nonpayment of accounts and cancellation due to nonpayment. And I just want to give you some numbers that surprised me a little bit because I had expected the possibility of some fairly high nonpayments this year. But in 1995-96, the cancellations due to nonpayment of their crop insurance premium was 866; in '96-97, 1,653; in '97-98, 597; in '98-99, 602; and '99-2000, it dropped to 240 which is the lowest level in a long, long time.

And so there seems to be, while there is . . . there are problems in agriculture, it is also true that payment of crop insurance and payment on most farm loans, whether it's at the lending institution — and this is in a general way — or at Farm Credit Corporation, we are not anywhere near the levels of non-payment that we were seeing in the mid-'80s. And it's not to say again — and I'm not trying to paint a picture that all is well and there are no problems — but the fact of the matter is that most farmers are, as you know, are out seeding. I think as of Sunday we had 79 per cent of the crop in the ground as compared to the 10-year average of 43 per cent. And I would expect as of today, this being Wednesday, we probably are close to 85 per cent of the crop and well on our way to seeding something . . . maybe a million acres above the 10-year average.

So, when you add all of this up — while it's not rosy and it's not without difficulty — the farm side seems to have stabilized a great deal from a year ago and certainly is nowhere near the instability that existed as a result of low grain prices in the 1980s.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Is your department and the Crop Insurance Corporation taking steps to try and increase the crop insurance coverage levels? Not coverage levels in terms of production levels, but the amount of producer uptake that there is? Through advertising . . . or are you looking at . . . Do you do things like focus testing your programs to see whether or not they are meeting the needs of farmers? What kind of steps do you take to determine what direction you are going to go with the Crop Insurance Corporation?

You made a number of changes this spring, of which we agreed with. And I'd like to know if you're looking at further adjustments as we move along in the program. Or what prompts decisions about change?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I want to reiterate, Mr. Chairman, to the committee again that this year the number of contracts in the province has increased by 1,049 which is a relatively significant increase in the number of people taking contracts with Crop Insurance.

And I think in large part that was some of the changes that occurred to the premium and also with some of the winds in the last of couple days, the reseeding issue — which I think you raised in question period last year — as being not sufficient especially for some of the pulse crops. I think that has been raised to a high of \$30 an acre for the reseeding for the pulses, so that has actually increased the number of people who would come in.

And I think we've had some calls as a result of the wind storm although the reseeding claims are considerably lower than they were at this time last year. Last year I think in total we had several thousand reclaims in total. I think so far this year we're at about 250 so that is . . . We're having a much better spring so far but we'll keep our fingers crossed.

In terms of some of the areas we're looking at changing to improve the numbers of people and the quality of the product that we have to offer, I think there's three main areas.

First of all to extend them to some of the new crops. As we

grow different crops, every year we have a new list in front of us that farmers would like us to cover. I think this year, Mr. Chairman, we're seeding 50 different crops, 50 different — not varieties — but 50 different crops in the province. A number of them are not covered by crop insurance but the request is there, and as we move in that direction I think that will increase the number of farmers who take crop insurance.

Secondly, on the issue of hail insurance you will know that the maximum coverage you can get on hail is 70 per cent. There have been requests to change that to 80 per cent and we're looking seriously at that. I can't announce that but we're working on it and hopefully we will have something to announce for the next crop year.

And the third main area, which I think has allowed some of the producers who are having a difficult time meeting their premium needs to become included in crop insurance, is a base program where the farmer pays no premium.

This year we lowered the premium level to a minimum of 10 per cent. We're looking at a new category possibly for next year which would provide a coverage of crop insurance at no cost to the farmer. Of course your coverage would be less but it would offer up another tool in the tool kit, if you want to look at it that way, for farmers who are looking at crop insurance.

So we think those three main changes, if we get them done and the consultation with groups is successful, that we will put in place for . . . hopefully for next year.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The whole marketing of the program is what we are wanting to discuss with you on how we can improve the affordability and the marketing of the program and move to quickly — or hopefully quickly — encourage more producers to become involved in the program.

Certainly in the area of specialty crops, we've seen an explosion of acreage in many of those crops. And I just noted on the weekend when I was at home, some of the information coming forward from the Crop Insurance Corporation about changes in a number of areas. And specialty crops have become very, very important. And as you noted earlier that it has an impact upon people's decision to make . . . people's decision to involve themselves in the crop insurance program.

And so I think the quicker of course that we can bring new crops into the list of insured crops, it certainly helps to bring more producers into the program. And I see on the weekend there was some crops, additional crops like coriander and chickpeas that have been . . . are covered now to very significant levels. Aniseed is another one that's confirmed.

And I understand, I'm told by some of the folks in my home community that you're going to be going out to a plant that deals with many of those speciality crops — Canadian Select Grains at Eston who has a very, very large operation there, and I think makes a good contribution to the community and indeed to the province as a whole.

And you will note, Mr. Minister, when you're there, if you know the smell of black licorice, well that comes from aniseed. And when you're at that plant, I want you to take note of that —

the whole place smells like black licorice . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I know. I'm told by some of the people that are involved in that plant that you'll be going out to that.

I want you to bring that back to the House because I'm having some difficulty with some of my members, making them believe that that's actually the case. But just a little aside, Mr. Minister.

But I think the important point that I want to make with you is that the quicker we can bring those new crops into the program, I think will encourage, will encourage many producers to become more involved with the program.

So there's affordability issues. There's new crop issues. There's certainly how we address coverage levels and how we can improve coverage levels. As you know, farmers are taking and using every tool available to them, technological tool available to them to increase yields and stay ahead of the cost-price squeeze in that effort.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm interested in your thoughts about how we can continue to make crop insurance affordable and market the program even further.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Well for the information of the committee, I think the member from Kindersley is correct when he says this program can never stay the same. It has to be ongoing work to look at it and to improve the quality of the product in the insurance program. And the reason being that the crops change constantly.

And I'd just like to read into the record the planning decreases and increases that farmers are making. And I start out by saying that it's not that many years ago that we seeded 20 million acres of wheat in this province, and I will just go through this to give you a comparison.

This year farmers plan to seed 9.1 million acres of wheat, which is down 16 per cent from last year; oats down 5 per cent at 1.9; rye down 54 per cent at 95,000 acres; flax down 36 per cent at 900,000 acres; canola down 18 per cent at 5.4 million acres; mustard down 25 per cent at 440,000; sunflower seed down 15 per cent at 55,000.

And those areas where the big increases are, durum wheat up 39 per cent at 5 million. The member from Kindersley may be a little concerned about the huge increase in durum because I know that's the product that he grows. Barley up 28 per cent at 5.4 million.

But here are the interesting crops for many of the farmers. Lentils up 16 per cent at 1.4 million; dried peas up 45 per cent at 2.2 million acres; and canaryseed up 12 per cent at 380,000.

And so you can see that as the crops change, obviously our program of insurance has to try to stay in front of that.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Minister, I think it's . . . we've seen this gradual shift away from traditional crops. And it's important, I think, from a number of standpoints as we move in that direction, the diversification that's taken place over the last number of years in crop mix has increased the stability for a lot

of farm producers out there. And I think we're all looking for that.

(1630)

No one is more encouraged by that than I and members on this side of the House as we see farmers move to non-traditional crops and the whole area of marketing becomes a part of that.

And it's interesting to see that in almost every single case when you move into those areas, it's into crops that are marketed in a far different fashion than traditional crops. And I think that that's an important development in agriculture that we are witnessing. And it's something that we are very, very supportive on this side of the House, farmers taking more of the initiative to control more of a part of the business that they . . . and indeed it is a business that they are involved in.

As we see farm size increasing, and we've seen that in very dramatic fashion over the last number of years, farmers are looking at diversification into specialty crops as an avenue of financial stability that is extremely important in maintaining their operations.

So I think anything that we can do as a legislature and as a Department of Agriculture and Food and from the Crop Insurance department to help in that regard would be important.

Mr. Minister, that brings us to the whole area of marketing of crops. And I think that that's an important area for producers in Saskatchewan these days. I know that a number . . . I note in the last number of years we've taken a little bit less . . . your department has taken a little bit less of an emphasis role on marketing and more of an emphasis role — at least I think you have — in terms of production.

And I think that that's something that we might want to examine a little bit. As we witness the increase in acreage of non-traditional marketed grains, I think we should be doing everything we can to increase the marketing focus in your department that we can.

And I saw some information the other day from — and it really surprised me quite frankly — out of Alberta, that in southern Alberta the irrigated area makes up about 2 per cent I'm told of the productive land in Alberta and yet produces somewhere in the neighbourhood of 18 per cent of the available return. So it speaks to the whole area of diversification in non-traditional crops.

And I think, Mr. Minister, what I'm asking from your department is the development and the ongoing development of programs in terms of assisting producers in marketing that we should be looking at, and I'm wondering what your thoughts are in that regard and how we can assist farmers in making good marketing decisions.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Maybe while I'm waiting for my staff to get me the information, I just have some interesting statistics on some of the crops that are before the Crop Insurance board for consideration to be added into the Crop Insurance program.

Just recently we have added hemp and mint and saskatoons . . . no, these are the ones we are looking at: hemp, mint, saskatoons, and dried beans. And we have just added alfalfa seed, caraway, chickpeas, both desis and kabulis, and also sunflowers. And then there's a long list that are being considered, things like borage, cabbage, pumpkins, and many other unusual products that are being grown and people are making a very good living.

I was talking to a farmer from Radisson who has, I think, 15 acres of apple trees. And he's selling them for a dollar a pound. And he was telling me fantastic numbers that he's getting from this small orchard of apples that are competing head-on in size and quality with the best apples being raised in British Columbia. So there are huge opportunities.

The other example that I like to use is the issue of the Hutterite brethren, who many people use as examples on one side that they're buying up too much land or that they should be doing more. But they own about 1 per cent of the land base in the province of Saskatchewan and on that land base they produce 30 per cent of the hogs in the province. They produce in the area of 20 per cent of the poultry and on and on and on.

And not to say that their style of farming or their lifestyle is good or bad or indifferent. I mean we're a very tolerant society and I actually think they do a very good job. But it's just to give you an indication of the land use. That you don't need a hundred quarters of land to make a living in the province. There may be that on 20 acres of land — growing apples or pumpkins or other commodities — that you can actually have a better quality of life than you can with huge equipment and a million dollars or \$5 million worth of land base.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was frankly looking for a little bit more in terms of . . . (inaudible) . . . You have some thoughts on the marketing of specialty crops and how we can encourage producers to become involved in the marketing of their crops, and I'd like your thoughts on that.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — On the issue of exporting and selling the pulse crops for crops in general, it's been our approach — and the member may have opinion on this as to how it's working in his area — but is to support much more the associations in their approach to exporting and organizing themselves.

So Sask Ag and Food would work with the pulse board and the organic growers and the herb and spice association. I know I have an opportunity to speak at their convention coming up in the very near future.

There's also at the government level some pretty active work in the potato area where we are now working with companies exporting seed potatoes into Prince Edward Island. And I know at the last Ag ministers' conference I spent, oh, an hour, an hour and a half with the minister from Prince Edward Island talking about the need to establish a permanent seed potato base in a province like Saskatchewan.

Because in Prince Edward Island, obviously because of the disease control and the ongoing production of potatoes, they would be very interested in signing long-term contracts with

producers on an ongoing basis to grow seed potatoes on dry land here and exporting them on a regular basis to Eastern Canada.

So these are the kind of things that I think we can do in terms of partnership and the approach with the associations.

I might add as well that the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, or STEP, does a lot of work with agriculture. And it would be great if all members of the Assembly had an opportunity to see that organization at work because it really is a unique attempt to blend the private sector and government into an agency that does, I think, some pretty spectacular work on putting the products from our province into the world market.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I would certainly agree with the direction in that area. What we would like to see on this side of the House is more of an emphasis on the assistance of understanding the marketing of crops for producers out there.

We see in some circles a very aggressive approach from producers to get involved in the marketing of their products. There are many other farmers who choose not to get involved in the marketing of their products, primarily in grains that are marketed under the Canadian Wheat Board.

We've seen some adjustments in the program from the Canadian Wheat Board to allow some forward pricing and that sort of stuff just in one crop, in wheat. I think that was an important step forward, and I hope the board of directors is looking at some changes in addition to that.

And I would like to know what your government's thoughts are on the changes that were made in the Canadian Wheat Board to allow for the pricing of some of your wheat at this time. As you know, that's an available option for farmers right now.

I'm wondering if your government supports those changes in that direction and how we can more aggressively get more crops involved into those kinds of things. Because you know very well and I know very well that younger farmers tend to be more involved in . . . and want to be more involved in the marketing of their products.

And so indeed these are the future farmers of Saskatchewan and in many cases are operating very sizeable operations right now, and will be the future of the farmers well into the future here in Saskatchewan.

So while we on this side of the House understand some people's reluctance to get involved in the marketing of their crops, I think we also have to recognize the fact that there has been a dramatic shift in opinion in this area and that we want to do everything we can to encourage farmers in this direction.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — The member opposite will know that the Canadian Wheat Board has been very instrumental in the grain industry in Western Canada for many, many years, and personally I think have done an excellent job of putting Canadian grain, both durum and hard wheat, into the market at a significant premium to farmers.

I want to say as well, though, that in the changing world economy, obviously, the Wheat Board has as much interest as any of us in changing in order to make the services they provide to farmers meet the continually changing economy of the world.

And I might add with the changes to the production patterns in the province, where we've gone from 20 million acres production of wheat to nine million acres, this obvious shift has meant the Canadian Wheat Board, that they have to do some fairly significant adjustments.

It's my view that the recent changes that allow flexibility for some of the producers were not taken up by producers to any extent. I think less than 100 farmers have actually — I was talking to someone yesterday — I think it's less than 100 farmers of the 40 or 50,000 farmers in the province have actually exercised the option that has been presented.

So whether it's relevant or not in the scheme of things when so few farmers pick up on it, I think leaves it to the future to see whether that change will do much to change and reflect the needs of farmers out into the future.

You mentioned the need for more ability for farmers to have access to information and do promotion and export. It always amazes me how much of that is going on already in quite remote areas of the province.

And to use one example — and to refer to my hometown or my home area as remote probably isn't a good example — but I was in Frontier the other day, and the Southland Processors, a young company, Michael Kirk and a group who have put together an exporting company for chickpeas and they're exporting them all over the world. And when I was there, the plant was busy preparing not carloads or hundred-train carloads, but 100 pound bags to meet the needs of a special religious festival in Turkey. And they were loading them in Frontier.

And what's amazing to me is that our entrepreneurs are out there finding this information on the Internet and plugging into niche markets and charging a fairly significant premium. And they're doing this without a lot of guidance from government or from anyone.

And so the fact of the matter is that when you have a system of farming where a few weeks ago the farmers got up, the conditions were right, and today we're getting close to having 33 million acres seeded without any instructions from the Minister of Agriculture — it just happens, it's like magic — this is a pretty innovative group of people.

And I know all of us as farmers like to complain about our plight in life, but very few of us would trade with anyone else, whether it would be being a lawyer or a consultant or a doctor. Many of us choose to be farmers because it's just a great way to make a living.

So whatever we can do in the Department of Agriculture to help that shift occur without interfering with the entrepreneurial spirit is the way I think we should be headed.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. That's frankly a breath of fresh air from an administration who hasn't been all

that supportive of that in the past. I'm pleased to hear you say that, and it may shock some of the people that you have represented over the last number of years that there has been a shift in this direction.

I interpret your comments as being that you would not be supportive of expanding the number of crops that are marketed under the Canadian Wheat Board then?

(1645)

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — To the contrary. For example, if the producers in the province came to us and said that they wanted to have a vote on some of these new crops being handled by the Wheat Board and it was the choice of the farmers to sell canola or any product through the Canadian Wheat Board, I would be all in favour of supporting that.

But I think what has to drive it, is it has to come from the farmers who would come to us with the idea. What I don't think is a good idea, where people for philosophical reasons either on the left or right, drive the agenda from Ottawa or Regina and impose that on farmers.

So my view is that, when I meet with the governor of North Dakota or the minister of Agriculture . . . the secretary of Agriculture, Roger Johnson, or the secretary from Montana, and they say we want to review the Canadian Wheat Board to see whether we can sell our durum through the Canadian Wheat Board because we believe there's a premium on it; I say good, let's review it. And those meetings are going on at the present time.

That's a big shift from where we were three years ago when there were protests at the U.S. border trying to keep durum from going into the United States. We actually have meetings going on now between the ag-secretary from North Dakota and the Canadian Wheat Board to see whether or not the Wheat Board would take their durum from North Dakota into the Canadian Wheat Board pool.

And so I look at this as all very practical. I don't think it should be a philosophical debate — right wing, left wing. I think that's the way you get economies into trouble. I think it's what works.

My personal view, although there will be people probably who disagree with me — if American farmers want to become involved in the Canadian Wheat Board, in the Pool and the durum coming out of that area . . . I think about 80 per cent of all the durum that moves into export position in the world is grown in a small oval of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, and Montana, and it's amazing with what you could do with that if you decided you were going to process it all here, all of it.

And I'm not talking about a monopoly or something that would interfere with international trade. But can you imagine any industry in the world controlled in one small area — 80 per cent of it — and what you could do with that if you had a vision for the future. And I think in that the Canadian Wheat Board could play a very, very important role.

But I think both those opposed to the Canadian Wheat Board

and the Wheat Board itself have to change in order to make that happen.

**Mr. Boyd:** — You're certainly correct, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair, that there is a need for change in that area.

While you are supportive — and I can appreciate your comments — you're supportive of the fact that if there were a producer group come forward that wanted to have a vote to see whether they wanted to include additional crops to the Canadian Wheat Board jurisdiction. Would you also be supportive of the converse of that then?

If there were producers coming forward that wanted to remove themselves from the Canadian Wheat Board, would you support their marketing choice in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — What I do know at this point in time is all the market research — and I could be wrong — the Canadian Wheat Board could, could probably provide this for us. But the majority of farmers in Saskatchewan who produce wheat — it's my understanding the survey is done by the Canadian Wheat Board — support the Wheat Board to the largest extent.

Quite honestly, I mean I know I hear the hard activists in support of the Wheat Board saying the world would end if you didn't have the Canadian Wheat Board, and I hear the right wing saying that it's the end of the world if you don't get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. My view is neither of those positions are, are accurate.

The fact of the matter is the Canadian Wheat Board has been hugely successful in protecting the interests of farmers in Western Canada and in this province. And I think still in almost every instant does a good job.

And I think the balance we have where if farmers want to grow pulse crops and market their own grain and yet have the option of growing durum and hard wheat that is sold through the Canadian Wheat Board. I think we have a very, very healthy agricultural marketing and exporting system. I think our difficulty is, is that we're competing with subsidies in other parts of the world that make it very difficult for our farmers to compete.

So I support the Canadian Wheat Board. I think it needs to change constantly just as crop insurance. And I think it's difficult if you have an organization that doesn't believe in change; and I think the Canadian Wheat Board is changing.

I would like to see the Canadian Wheat Board more involved in local processing of the grains that they handle. And we can imagine what that might mean. But I think they could be much more involved in actually being more involved in getting more local processing.

And that's not to say that they're not at the present time. The pasta plant in Saskatoon, which just went through a fairly major upgrade and increase in production, all of the grain, the durum produced or used there, comes to the Canadian Wheat Board and they're quite pleasantly surprised at the quality of grains the Canadian Wheat Board is able to deliver to them on a constant

basis at a predictable price.

So I think it's . . . what causes us difficulty is when we apply philosophies to agriculture, either right wing or left wing; I think it has to be much more practical than that.

**Mr. Boyd:** — We couldn't agree with you more on this side of the House with respect to that, Mr. Minister. We don't subscribe to the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board. What we subscribe to is the producer's right to make the decision about whether they feel it's appropriate for them or not.

And I think it is far different than what some people would be advocating. and it's far less than what some other people would be advocating. I think it's a position of practicality. I think it's a position that a lot of farmers hold because they believe that they should have the ability to make a decision on their own about how they market their products.

I cannot see a parallel in any other industry anywhere that I can think of. There may be some and you . . . I'm sure your department officials will provide you with information in that area, but I don't know of as an example any other industry that's subjected to this kind of very, very strict control in terms of how people market their product.

And if you look at very, very significant industries in Canada and the United States and elsewhere, the auto industry. There's no one that suggests to General Motors where or when or how they can sell their product or for what price that they are going to receive it. It's set obviously by the marketplace and that provides them with a very strong market signals and it also provides them with a discipline that is necessary in a free market economy to make the determination as to where they should or should not place their emphasis.

And I think as we see agriculture developing over the last number of years, and as more and more younger farmers come into this industry — a very significant industry in this province — we see them wanting to take more and more control over how they manage and operate their operations.

And one of the largest components of their industry is how they are going to sell their product. And again, I couldn't agree with you more when we see the exciting developments in specialty crops, in exotic crops, in livestock and all of those kinds of things where we see people, farmers taking charge of the industry and making decisions about how they want to go forward in that industry.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm pleased to hear that you don't support any kind of rigid position in this debate, in this what has become in a lot of cases a philosophical debate. I think it's a debate that farmers want to engage in. I think it's a debate that we as a legislature and you as a Minister of Agriculture and your department officials should allow the industry to debate and go forward in terms of making decisions about how we are going to advance the industry into the future.

Rather than being afraid of marketing, and that's what some people are, rather than being afraid of marketing, we should be doing everything we possibly can to encourage farmers to take



control of their industry in this area.

And I think that some of the programs that we've seen over the last number of years in terms of helping farmers assess risk through crop insurance and the like, helping farmers to maximize production through your department and ag research and development that we support very significantly, all of those are a part of the puzzle I think that farmers are looking for.

But I think in growing numbers . . . and frankly I dispute your thoughts in terms of the amount of support that there is for a rigid position, which I believe that is a rigid position of some people saying that we will not allow under any circumstances some crops, very significant acreage crops, to be marketed by individuals, but only it has to go through the Canadian Wheat Board.

And so, Mr. Minister, I think we owe it to farmers and we owe it to society who right now are supporting agriculture to the tune of very, very significant numbers of dollars — hundreds of millions, if not into the billions at the national level — that needs to be encouraged to do everything we can as an industry and as legislators to advance the industry as much as we can in this regard.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm hopeful that we will see some direction from your department as to how we can move forward in terms of marketing crops.

I think we should be offering courses as we have in the past, about marketing crops. There is a little bit of that going on. Part of the reason I believe that you are not seeing a big take-up in the industry of the Canadian Wheat Board's latest program, is simple. It's not all that attractive, frankly.

There's lots of analysis from private individuals out there about the, you know, the basis that you have to lock in; the amount of flexibility that there is in the program. Really it doesn't offer the kind of marketing choice that I think farmers are looking for.

I think it was a step in the right direction. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that it wasn't a step in the right direction. But I think it is a very small step to what some producers would like to see well into the future.

So, Mr. Minister, I would encourage your department and your government to move in this area to encourage producers to take charge in terms of marketing. Just as we have seen I believe with the specialty crop industry, I think we would see a very aggressive number of farmers out there wanting to take control of those kinds of issues within their operations.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Chairman, I agree with the member opposite that marketing is a big, important issue. But I really can . . . and I suppose this is where we will disagree, that somehow the Canadian Wheat Board has stopped farmers from developing in this province or Western Canada, and that somehow this has been a detriment to the development of agriculture.

If you go into rural Montana, which you know well and I know well . . . I mean, they have no Canadian Wheat Board, and yet if

you look at communities along No. 2 Highway which runs between Harlem and Chinook and Havre and Shelby, there are virtually no people left in that part of the state. And you can't blame the Canadian Wheat Board for that. They've had the wonderful opportunity to market their own grain.

No, quite honestly, if you look at the population drain from rural Montana with the removal of the branch lines, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba and Saskatchewan have been able to maintain rural population to a much larger degree than those areas in rural United States. And a lot of it I think has had to do with programs of support and also the Canadian Wheat Board.

But we can have this debate for a long time. But the fact of the matter is, if it was just the Canadian Wheat Board, you would drive south of the border and then you would see all the wonderful results of not having a Canadian Wheat Board.

And quite honestly, in North Dakota and Montana, they're not there. The largest city in Montana is less than 100,000 people. And so the fact is not whether it was the Canadian Wheat Board or not the Canadian Wheat Board.

I've tracked out and I'll share with the members opposite the graph of population change in the four jurisdictions — Manitoba, Montana, North Dakota, and Montana. And you would swear that they are all the same. They all track, year by year, the depression.

And so to say that it's some sort of a philosophical thing that has created the circumstance in the Great Plains of North America, that . . . it isn't inaccurate.

I mean we all like to do it. I like to blame Grant Devine for all the . . . the highest out-migration of young people. And you can go through the graphs and you'll see it. But the fact of the matter is it was record low grain prices that were causing a lot of that grief.

And you would like to make it that it was our operation. But the fact of the matter is it isn't possible that these graphs that show migration off the farm into urban centres occurring at exactly the same rate — in North Dakota, Montana, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan being the same — it can't possibly be that they all had bad governors and bad premiers all at the same time. And the reason Alberta has a booming economy has to do much more with the fact they have 90 per cent of Canada's oil than it has to do with agricultural programs.

And so I think there also needs to be a reality check about some of the things we say about what the Canadian Wheat Board has done and hasn't done.

And maybe on that note, Mr. Chairman, I would move the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.