

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to present a petition on behalf of the people of the southwest area with regard to the fuel tax. 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 this petition is signed from citizens in the Hodgeville, Webb, and Wymark areas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition reading the prayer:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the communities of Swift Current, Rush Lake, Sceptre, Glentworth.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition in regards to 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, Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Swift Current, Regina, and Saskatoon.

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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this is signed by residents of Swift Current, Saskatoon, and even Calgary, Mr. Speaker.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition for citizens of Saskatchewan who are also concerned with the high price of fuel, and the prayer reads:

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

And as in duty bound your petitioners ever pray.

And this is signed by residents of Govan and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present regarding cellular phone service in the Strasbourg, Duval, Govan, and Bulyea districts. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the districts of Strasbourg, Duval, Govan, and Bulyea.

This is signed by people in the Strasbourg, Govan, and Bulyea area.

And as in duty bound I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today . . . I have a petition to reduce fuel tax.

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

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures are from Fleming, Saskatoon, Martensville, Davidson, and even one from Ontario. I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Assembly today to bring forth 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 who have signed this petition are from the centres of Goodsoil and my hometown of Spiritwood.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

To halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities;

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

To abandon plans to confiscate municipal reserve accounts; and

To provide reliable cellular service in Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, and Cudworth.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of 26 students and teachers in the west gallery. These grades 5 to 8 students are from the Harvest City Christian Academy in the constituency of Regina Coronation Park in the north end.

This is a group that has been here a couple of years running now, and it's always a pleasure to see them come to the legislature and have an opportunity to meet with them and share a refreshment later. The group are with their teachers Ms. Ruebi Erfle and Mrs. Grace Hillsden. I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming this group to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker. And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of other people I'd like to acknowledge and I thank the hon. member for Rosthern for his understanding. In the west gallery is my cousin Greg Trew, Greg with SEIU (Service Employees' International Union), and I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to get together and have a little chat with you a little bit later, Greg.

And also while I'm on my feet, is my good buddy, Fred Kress, in the back of the west gallery. And I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming these two friends.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to introduce guests to you and through you to the members to this House. Seated in the east gallery are 23 grade 7 and 8 students from East Central School from Prince Albert rural, and they're accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Val Horner, as well as by a

number of chaperones: Mr. Joe Bexson, Mr. Glenn Olsen, Ms. Connie Walters, Ms. Twila Gola, and Ms. Teresa Worobets. We would like to welcome them to the legislature, and I'll be meeting with them in a little later on to try and clarify what they all will see here this morning.

Would you join me to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to stand in my place and introduce to you and through to you to all colleagues in the Assembly, a group that the hon. member from Coronation Park and I determined would be on the right side of the west gallery facing my direction, Mr. Speaker.

They're 39 students who have come in from White City Elementary School. They're in grade 8 so I know that they will have lots of good, interesting questions for me when I meet with them later. I want to say that I've had the opportunity to be at White City School for an Optimist bicycle safety day and to speak to the students during an assembly for career days, and I've always been warmly welcomed by them.

They're accompanied today by Ms. Joyce Dudley, their teachers, and Mr. Geof Schick. I would ask all members to join me in giving a warm welcome to the grade 8 students and the teachers from White City Elementary School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member from Rosthern at welcoming the students, the chaperones, and the teachers from East Central School. It was, a few years back, part of my constituency so I was able to get to know many of their parents and their friends.

I'm hopeful that the decorum in the House will be sufficient that the member from Rosthern will not have to explain too much what happens in question period after the session. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, representatives of the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses that are here this morning to witness first reading of The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000.

I'd like to introduce Noella Hart who is the president of the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses; as well as Ede Leeson, the executive director of SALPN (Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses).

And I'd also like to welcome Greg Trew from SEIU, which is the union that represents many licensed practical nurses in the province. I also understand that there are people from CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) here as well who represent licensed practical nurses.

Mr. Speaker, these nurses have come from various parts of Saskatchewan to witness first reading of their Act. And I'd like to have the legislature acknowledge these nurses that provide care to people in this province day in and day out in licensed nursing homes, in our acute care centres or hospitals, home care, and community care.

So welcome, welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to rise today to extend a welcome on behalf of the official opposition to the licensed practical nurses of Saskatchewan. And I'd especially like to welcome Heather Cugnet who is from the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy and is with them today. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Congratulations to Post-Secondary Graduates

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, today is a special day of pride for thousands of students and their families and friends. I wish to extend our congratulations to our post-secondary students who have graduated over these past two weeks.

This week, Mr. Speaker, alone, 1,400 students graduated from the University of Regina, and 2,900 students graduated from the University of Saskatchewan. Thousands more graduated from SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and the SUNTEP (Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program) programs.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I will be attending my niece Lara's, graduation from SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) teacher education program in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, these young people are the future of our province and this country. And more and more of them are staying in Saskatchewan after graduation. In fact, Saskatchewan experienced a net in-migration of 4.5 of technical and university students two years after their graduation. This is a considerable improvement over the mid-'80s, when Saskatchewan lost 7 per cent of their graduates. There is reason to be optimistic in this province, Mr. Speaker, and students are reflecting that optimism by staying here.

On behalf of the government, I wish to congratulate all of the graduates and wish them best of luck into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Liberal Party Leader On-line

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I read with interest in this morning's paper that the illustrious Leader of the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan went on-line last night to talk to the people of Saskatchewan.

The only problem is, Mr. Speaker, that only three people actually wanted to talk to him. All of the three people took the opportunity to chat with the Liberal leader last night, which I'm told is the exact same number of Liberals in Saskatchewan who support the Liberal leader, who has now taken refuge under the NDP's (New Democratic Party) watchful eye.

I got some advice for the Liberal Party and their leader: come time for your next convention, I suggest you do it as well on-line, because I'm sure there'll only be about three people who will be willing to climb on the leader's bus to try and save his hide.

And I think people should watch that convention closely this fall, Mr. Speaker, because I think we'll find out the real definition of the word scrap. We'll find out really if this is an operative word or if scrap really does mean scrap, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

70th Anniversary of Lakeview Elementary School

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, just five blocks west of our Legislative Building on 20th Avenue and Cameron Street is another imposing and historic piece of bricks and mortar, a building that holds within its walls a significant portion of the history of the Lakeview district of Regina Lakeview constituency.

I'm talking of Lakeview Elementary School which today is celebrating its 70th anniversary as a valuable part of the Regina public school system. The theme of this day is Celebration 2000, and the purpose is to celebrate 70 years of success at Lakeview School.

Mr. Speaker, a school this close to the legislature obviously will have some shared history. For instance, some of the children of Premiers Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney attended Lakeview, as I suspect did children of earlier premiers.

The current Chair of the Regina Public School Board, Mr. Bob Brown, is an alumnus, as is Dr. Bill Alport, whose grandchildren are currently Lakeview students. The roll call through the years contains many other Saskatchewan citizens who have made important contributions to our province.

Today, beginning at 4 p.m., there will be tours, refreshments, and many shared memories. The Lieutenant Governor will be there at 6 p.m. for the official cake cutting.

We wish to congratulate all of the present and future students at Lakeview School as it continues to supply people for our constituency and our province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

State of Agriculture in Saskatchewan

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to address yesterday's statement by the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

I find it interesting that this member from the urban sector

would proudly stand up and proceed to tell everyone about the good news from the rural sector. The reason why seeding is ahead of schedule is not because of the adjustment payment activities that this government is so proud of, but rather because of the dry conditions existing in this province.

These farmers have quietly gone about their business in spite of the lack of support from both levels of government, in spite of adverse dry conditions, in spite of the existing high-input costs, and in spite of the dismal crop price forecast. To add insult to injury, we now hear that the Agriculture minister has publicly stated that agriculture is doing very well in this province.

Well, hello, if you wanted to rile up a relatively quiet group of people, that was the way to go about it. The last thing the farmers need is the Agriculture minister giving the people of Saskatchewan the perception that there's no longer an agriculture crisis.

My phones have been ringing off the hook ever since with angry farmers. The question that I have for the Agriculture minister is, when was the last time you talked to a farmer in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Golden Sheaf Awards

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know the member from Regina Lakeview is always bragging about the artists and writers in his constituency, and justifiably I suppose. But he and other members need to know that some of that talent has waded across the creek and has taken up residence in Regina Centre.

I'm just a little late in reporting this, but I'm proud to announce that two of a three member award winning team live in my constituency. At the recent Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival, the top Golden Sheaf Award, the award for the category Best of Saskatchewan went to the film *Daisy*. A film by the way, which I saw at its premiere.

Daisy was produced by Loreena Weideman from Craven; by Hildy Bowen and Dianne Ouelette from Regina Centre; and Dianne Ouelette was the director. This totally independent film won out over works by larger, well-established Saskatchewan companies which makes the award even more remarkable.

That's an important accomplishment for these three young filmmakers. It gives them recognition and respectability in the tenuous world of independent short filmmaking. And it makes them a bit of money to make their next film.

So my congratulations to Loreena, Hildy, and Dianne, and my respect to the Yorkton Film Festival for giving these filmmakers a venue where these works can be reviewed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Highways

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been necessary for the last couple of weekends for me to travel to Alberta and

that's always been an interesting thing when you move down the highway from one province to another one.

Recently one of those trips took me from Moose Jaw through to Medicine Hat. And it was interesting that as soon as I ended up into the Alberta side, there's a few changes in the highway, but also you had the independent contractor that takes care of the highways proudly announce who was in charge of the highways.

So when I came back from Medicine Hat back to Saskatchewan, I experienced the usual things: the speedometer . . . or the speed limit changed; we had more potholes; the highway got narrower; and I expected for sure we would have a sign there saying our Highways minister was proud to take care of the highways of Saskatchewan. But there was no such sign.

As I said, the highways narrowed, speed limits became less, there was a crash as I hit a few potholes. And sure enough there was a sign — it said "Saskatchewan Naturally."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Meota Curler of the Century

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, curling is the sport of Saskatchewan and its greatest enthusiast is a constituent of mine, Jessie Fitch. On April 3, the Meota Curling Club honoured 87-year-old Jessie as the Curler of the Century.

Jessie's parents were newlyweds in Scotland when they were scheduled to immigrate to Canada on the *Titanic*. Fortunately they missed the boat and Jessie was born nine months later. She began her curling career in 1939 and has actively curled throughout the past eight decades.

By curling in the year 2000, Jessie has reached her personal goal of curling in two centuries. She has now reluctantly hung up her broom at the insistence of her family. She has been described by teammates and fans alike not only as a great curler who is very sportsmanlike, but both on and off the ice, she is a great ambassador for the sport of curling.

Jessie's dedication and commitment demonstrate the kind of person that makes my constituency the envy of Saskatchewan. I ask all members to join with me in congratulating this great woman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Funding for Highway Maintenance

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Minister of Finance tell us what a great job he's doing of fixing the highways. Mr. Speaker, I imagine the highways do look pretty good from the air as he flies over them, but those of us who actually have to drive them know that they're a disaster. The minister was bragging about the fact that he collects many millions of dollars more in gas tax than he actually spends on highways.

Mr. Minister, the fact is you are actually spending less money this year on highway construction than you spent last year; \$61 million this year compared to 65 million last year. Mr. Minister, how can you tell us that you're fixing the highways and looking after them when you're actually spending less on construction?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a very interesting game that the opposition likes to play in the legislature every day because they come into the legislature and they say we should reduce the taxes that we collect on fuel on the one hand; and on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, they say that we should spend more on our highways and roads. And I have to tell the opposition and the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, that it doesn't add up. You can't have less revenue collected to fix the highways and more spending on the highways.

And what I have to say to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, is that this budget represents the largest investment in highways and roads construction and maintenance in the history of the province, Mr. Speaker. That's what the budget does. That's what this government stands for. That's what the opposition voted against when they voted against the budget in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister might as well give that 10 cents a litre break to the consumers of the province because he's not spending it on highways anyhow.

Mr. Minister, over the past decade Saskatchewan has just put 56 per cent of its gas tax revenues into highway repair — 56 per cent, Mr. Minister. That's dead last of any province in Canada.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation calls this highway robbery, and that's exactly what it is. Your government charges the third highest tax on gas of any province in Canada — 6 cents a litre more than Alberta, three and a half cents more than Manitoba. And yet when it comes to investing money in highways in Saskatchewan, you are dead last.

Now, Mr. Minister, when are you going to address the deplorable state of Saskatchewan's highways?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite, who I've had some very I think interesting discussions on the issue of highways in his riding, and he will know that last week I think we spent about an hour with the deputy minister of Highways going over individual roads in his constituency. I'm a little surprised that today he would rise and play politics with an issue that we're trying to get solved in his area.

But let me tell you, let me tell you the reason that . . . let me tell you the reason that 80 per cent of the money we collect on road tax on gasoline is used for roads is because we pay about \$750 million in interest which has to come out of taxes — gas tax as well — in order to pay for the Grant Devine debt, the Grant Devine debt, which the member from Moosomin, the member from Moosomin who yells from his desk, sat around the caucus table . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. Elhard: — Well I don't know about the accumulation of debt because I wasn't around when it happened, but I know some members of this House were, and they contributed to that debt initially.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, last year you had nearly 400 claims for vehicle damage caused by highway conditions. That's 400 vehicles in this province that were damaged from just driving down the road. Don't you think that's a problem?

On top of that, this government only pays for claims at unmarked highway hazards. That doesn't even count the thousands of potholes that are marked by little orange flags out there.

Mr. Minister, the other day I had a constituent suggest the Department of Highways could save a lot of money by just marking the parts of the highway that weren't falling apart.

Mr. Minister, how can you say that you're doing enough to fix the highways when over one vehicle a day is severely damaged just driving down Saskatchewan's highways?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again, just a small lesson of history for the member opposite, you'll remember back in 1982 — 1982 when the then leader of the Conservative Party promised to eliminate the gas tax and did for a few years and ran the debt up which we are now paying off, now paying off . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The question was allowed to be heard. Kindly allow the answer to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite, he will remember that the Grant Devine government did what they're suggesting today — to remove the gas tax. Ran up the debt to \$15 billion. Sold the highway equipment. And now they have the audacity to come here and say, why are the roads in bad shape, after they ran the debt up which we are now paying the interest on of \$750 million a year.

The member from Moosomin, the member from Kindersley who went to conventions; the member from Weyburn who worked for the Devine administration; the member from Swift Current — all of them Tories who worked hard to build up the debt which we're now having to pay off.

And they have the audacity to say, why are the roads in bad shape.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's some selective memory at work here I believe. As I recall, Mr. Minister, it's not the Saskatchewan Party that says that highways are falling apart — it's the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, we conducted a poll recently, and the people were asked if they felt safe driving on provincial highways, and fully

one-half of the respondents said no, categorically no; and 87 per cent said that your government should be doing more to improve highways in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, why are you continuing to neglect the Saskatchewan highways issue? Why are you continuing to ignore the concerns of Saskatchewan people, people who don't feel safe on your roads?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite and my friend from Cypress Hills. Just imagine this. Everyday we've heard for the last two months a request by those members to reduce the gas tax by 10 cents a litre. Even *The StarPhoenix* is saying this is Grant Devine all over again. Where would you get the money? Then he has the audacity to come here and say: and spend more money in my constituency on roads. Maybe we could do one or the other but think about the inconsistency of your statement to say get rid of the gas tax and spend more money on my roads in Cypress Hills.

Now I think you're a credible individual, but your questions really lead one to doubt whether or not you're asking on behalf of your constituents or just playing politics. Which of those is it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Income

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, the other day I heard you on the radio declaring that the farm crisis was over. I remember another NDP member . . . Minister of Agriculture declaring the farm crisis over a little prematurely as well, and I wonder if you happen to know where he is today?

Mr. Minister, yesterday Statistics Canada released the provincial farm cash receipts for the first quarter of the year 2000. They show a 10 per cent drop in farm cash receipts in Saskatchewan compared to the first quarter of 1999.

Mr. Minister, these figures show things aren't quite as rosy as you like to think they are. Why, Mr. Minister, has your government put the farm crisis on the back burner?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member from Kindersley that certainly I have not declared, nor has anyone declared, that the issue of large farm subsidies which are paid in Europe and the United States, which caused huge difficulty for Saskatchewan farmers, that that issue has gone away. Far from that. In fact what we are arguing is that some of the subsidies in our neighbours to the south in the United States have actually increased in the last six months which will bear even more pressure on farmers.

So any of your interpretation that you're saying that the crisis is over, if that's the comments you're making . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I did not say that. The member opposite is not telling the truth if he says I'm saying it. I'm . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. I will just caution hon. members to kindly choose their words judiciously and not impugn motives of other members in the House, please. Complete your answer.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to say to the member opposite that he should get his facts right. I have said clearly that the situation in Saskatchewan is very tight and tough for farmers. That's what it is.

But I have to say that the farm community has been able to put together enough cash, along with the taxpayers of Canada and this province through payments and interest-free loans, to get about 33 million acres seeded this spring and that is a large credit — not to you, Mr. Member, who preaches gloom and doom — but to the farm families who are out there struggling to seed the crop. Leave them alone and quit playing . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The farm community would dearly love to be left alone by you and your government, I tell you, sir. And in fact, there's a couple of other things that you and your government have said recently that they have on their mind these days. I remind you of some of the things you said in your Throne Speech, Mr. Minister, in which you promised two things.

You promised to form a provincial action committee on the rural economy made up of the farm leaders involved in the last year's delegation to Ottawa, and you promised to implement a long-term safety net program for agriculture.

And what have you done with both of those promises, Mr. Minister? You have done absolutely nothing.

And that's what causes concern in the farm community these days. Just because no one is out front protesting in front of the legislature — they're busy at home seeding these days — doesn't mean the farm crisis is over, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, what happened to those promises that you made in the Throne Speech — the Throne Speech that promised an action committee on agriculture, and more importantly, a safety net program. What happened to those promises, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, one thing I will tell the member opposite that we're not doing and that is what he did personally to sabotage the farm coalition. Personally, he should take total responsibility for that.

I want to say to the member opposite as well, our Throne Speech commitments are being dealt with and will be announced.

But what I would ask that member and other members who are supporting the Canadian Alliance Party — that policy of no subsidies for farmers, of no subsidy for farmers that you have endorsed — how does this meet with your commitment and

argument to have a long-term safety net program paid for by the taxpayers of Canada? How do those two mesh?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only are the farmers upset with you, they realize that you are a failure in agriculture and that is why there isn't a single member on that side of the House that represents a rural constituency in this province. And there won't be for a very long time, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Let me refresh your memory, Mr. Speaker. The Throne Speech said, and I quote:

... (The) government will pursue a long term safety net program that can actually meet farmers' needs in disastrous situations like the one we currently face.

Well, Mr. Minister, where is it? Where is what you have promised the farmers? Where is the long-term safety net program you promised eight solid years ago when you ripped up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts from the farmers of this province? Where is the long-term safety net promised, that you committed to in the Throne Speech just six months ago? Or was that just more political rhetoric from your so-called coalition government, propped up by a Liberal . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member is so upset. They cannot stand good news. That's the problem.

The fact of the matter is they said, they said . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite cannot stand success of farmers. This is the problem.

They said last fall that the program that was being worked on would mean that farmers would not be able to seed the 2000 crop. And every day we talk about the great work being done by farmers and a record crop in record time being seeded. And he can't stand that. Do you know why? Because it's bad politics for him, that's all. And he is disappointed. So he comes here today to rev up his troops to see if he can't get anger and angst going again in rural Saskatchewan.

Well I'll tell you, there's only one answer that your party and the Canadian Alliance have — it's a stock, pat answer — no money for farmers, no subsidies, and no plan. I ask you . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the good news for farmers

according to the NDP is a drop of 10 per cent in cash receipts courtesy of you and your government. That's the good news that farmers have got from you.

What you can't stand, Mr. Minister, is people pointing out the fact that there are broken promises every day from this government: no long-term safety net — well no commitment to agriculture in any respect; no commitment to putting forward a rural task force on the deplorable situation in agriculture. No, in fact the farm crisis is out of sight and out of mind as far as the NDP is concerned. You've got far more important issues to deal with, don't you. You've got hospitals to close, you've got taxes to raise, and you've got unions to pay off.

Well, Mr. Minister, the problem isn't over and what you are doing about it is absolutely nothing. Mr. Minister, where is the long-term safety net that you promised? Where is the task force on agriculture that you promised? When are you going to live up to at least some of the promises that you have committed to agriculture?

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite just a small list if he'll be patient. The removal of the gas tax has been well accepted in rural Saskatchewan, I would argue paid for by our friends and neighbours across this province. The \$50 million in tax reduction on property, a commitment made and delivered to the people of the province; \$260 million, 95 per cent of the applications, now paid out to farmers with the cash in their account — done and completed; 300 million in AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) being paid out this year. You may think it's nothing. Four hundred million in cash advance, interest free, before seeding for the first time — done.

Now you may think that's not a commitment by the taxpayers and families in this province but I'll tell you, sir, that your ability to try to rev up disruption and dissent in rural Saskatchewan for political purposes should be, I say, rejected because you're a troublemaker. Let the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Labour Laws

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. Mr. Speaker, the united steel workers . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, please. I recognize it's Friday. Kindly allow the member to be heard.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, the united steel workers union has now laid more unfair labour charges against Doepker Industries and PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association). And what are these charges for? Well Ken Neuman, district director for the union, says the latest charges relate to a series of public meetings and statements critical of the provincial labour laws.

That's what it's come to. It is now illegal to criticize the government in this province. Madam Minister, what kind of a dictatorship are you trying to run here? Why have you outlawed freedom of speech?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm always pleased to answer questions on labour, but I'm particularly happy to answer this one because it gives me an opportunity to clarify some information.

First of all, the section of the Act that the member is complaining about does not prohibit an employer from correcting misinformation. It only prohibits attempts to interfere with, restrain, intimidate, threaten, or coerce an employee. And I might say that that provision exists in every jurisdiction in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Clearly this government and this Labour minister doesn't realize the chilling effect its labour laws has on the new investment in this province. Mr. Speaker, the union director has identified some other so-called offences. He says:

On a regular basis you've got Mr. Schneider having meetings. There's an information that's being put out into lunchrooms and bulletin boards which is freely being passed out by the company.

Apparently it's now illegal to have meetings and pass out information.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have accused us of trying to turn Saskatchewan into Alabama North. The NDP is turning this province into Cuba North. It is now illegal to criticize the government, hold public meetings, or distribute information.

Madam Minister, will you change your NDP labour laws that outlaw freedom of speech?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. Minister of Labour, if you were able to hear the question, you, please . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I would just want to start by reiterating that we hugely value the contributions of Doepker Industries in this province. And because we hugely value this industry, we have done a great deal of work in terms of manufacturing and processing tax credits. We have provided training money. Recently, there was a \$315,000 grant announced to assist in technology for exports.

We greatly value this, but please understand that during any union certification process — some of which are successful, some of which aren't — this is the kind of climate that quite often exists. It's controversial. It's difficult for the people involved. But please to understand these are the rules everywhere in Canada in an attempt to create a level playing field in a difficult discussion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this climate is unacceptable to new investors in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where the owner of a company isn't allowed to speak with his own employees. How on earth are you supposed to run a business under these conditions?

Mr. Speaker, Dave Doepker isn't allowed to talk, but we know money talks. And last year the NDP got over \$70,000 from the United Steel Workers of America — \$70,000, Mr. Speaker. That's what this is really about. Their union paid off the NDP; so now the NDP is paying off the union.

Madam Minister, all we are asking for is freedom of speech in the workplace so workers are allowed to hear both sides of the story. In fact, we have introduced a Bill to that effect.

Madam Minister, will you allow freedom of speech in the workplace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I appreciate that the member opposite is too young to know this, but this has been going on for 55 years. And I'm going to be very clear in this answer because it's very important to understand this.

The section of the Act does not prohibit an employer from correcting misinformation. The employer can communicate with its employees even about collective bargaining so long as the communication is not direct bargaining, and is not an attempt to undermine the union, and does not interfere with, restrain, intimidate, threaten, or coerce. And likewise the union is prevented from interfering if the employees are involved in a discussion about de-certification.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leasing Vehicles in the Prince Albert Health District

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. The Prince Albert Health District leases about 14 vehicles for the various departments including mental health services, public health, and health inspectors who travel throughout the district. The district has now just announced they will be leasing another six vehicles because it will save them from paying staff to use their own vehicles. They have been paying off . . . they've been paying staff and nurses anywhere from 68 cents a kilometre to \$1.08 a kilometre.

Madam Minister, why on earth would the health district be paying over a dollar a kilometre for staff mileage in the first place? Why, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Minister, or Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this: that as the Minister of Health in the province of Saskatchewan, I want to assure the public that I deal with the larger issues attached to the health system, and I will have to take notice on this particular question.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Health District claims that they will save over 50 per cent of the mileage costs by leasing these vehicles instead of paying off the use of their own. But why are they paying such high mileage rates now?

The anticipated federal rate for mileage by Revenue Canada is 37 cents a kilometre. Anything over that is deemed income and taxable. It's one thing to say they are saving money by leasing but the mileage rates they are paying at present are totally ridiculous.

Madam Minister, you have health districts across this province in financial trouble and anyone . . . everyone is wondering how our health care dollars are being spent. Isn't this an example of health care dollars being misdirected?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said I will get the technical detail for the member.

But I do know this, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations does on occasion, every two or three years, bargain collectively with their unions, Mr. Speaker. And their unions come from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Service Employees' International Union, the Health Sciences Association, as well as the Saskatchewan government employees' union.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the question that he asked is attached to the collective agreement, but I have indicated that I will find out the information for the member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It definitely feels that we definitely need a value for audit for our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the health district says, we think the additional six vehicles would save them \$30,000 a year. Anywhere the health districts can make better use of health care dollars is a good thing. This is an example of where changes can be made right now to save money at a time where health care dollars are at a premium. But this instance of paying health district staff incredibly high mileage rates, and of leasing high-priced vehicles, is not secluded to the P.A. (Prince Albert) Health District.

Madam Minister, any review this government undertakes should examine the value for money we are getting for our health care dollars. Will you give the public a commitment that all ways to achieve better efficiencies in administration will be examined? Will you do that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd be very pleased to talk about the review that the province of Saskatchewan will announce shortly. What I can assure the members is it's not going to be a review done by the Provincial Auditor, where they will only look at the revenues and expenditures, Mr. Speaker. We are going to have a review of the entire system.

But I will say this — I will say this, Mr. Speaker — we will not go to Bill 11 which allows private surgical clinics because that's what those members want to do, and it's in all of their campaign material. We will not go to private surgical clinics, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we believe in the five principles of the Canada Health Act, and we do not call them mindless slogans as the Sask Party does, Mr. Speaker.

We will defend publicly funded and publicly administered medicare in this country. We do not want to go to a US (United States) styled, two-tiered system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 73 — The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 73, The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, hon. members, I wish to table the report received from the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, the *Report of the Provincial Auditor* to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on the financial statements of Crown agencies for the years ending in the calendar year 1999.

I so table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order with respect to the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, rule 10(4).

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the private member's statement made this morning by the member from Watrous. In her statement she specifically referred to and took issue with the private member's statement yesterday by the member from Regina Qu'Appelle. And the rules of the Assembly state, rule 10(4) states: "Statements are not debatable and are not responded to by any other Member."

I would ask you to make a ruling on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would contend that that point of order is not well taken. There was no debate. Debate follows one another in order. This was simply a commentary, Mr. Speaker, on that member's opinion of the events taking place within the province of Saskatchewan and was not debate.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, under rule 10(4) members' statements are not debatable or responded to by any other

member. And the point of order is well taken.

And I would just ask all hon. members to please observe that members' statement period is not a period for debate but to talk about constituency issues or other matters other than entering into debate. The point of order is well taken.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has two main purposes. The first is to amend section 9(2) of the Act to facilitate the sale of certain assets from the Bank of Montreal to Saskatchewan's credit union system to ensure continued banking services in certain rural Saskatchewan communities.

The second purpose, Mr. Speaker, is to provide for the transfer of all assets, employees, and functions of the personal property registry to the Saskatchewan Land Information Services Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to the first point, as you're aware, the credit union system has purchased 17 Bank of Montreal branches in rural Saskatchewan. We're pleased and encouraged by the creativity which the Bank of Montreal and the credit union system have shown in ensuring that banking systems will continue to be provided in these communities.

Towards that end, Mr. Speaker, Credit Union Central has requested that an amendment be made to The Personal Property Security Act, 1993 to facilitate this transfer. The amendment would allow the credit unions to accept an assignment of security under the federal Bank Act without risking the immediate loss of their security position when it's registered under The Personal Property Security Act, 1993.

The change in wording, Mr. Speaker, does not represent a change in policy, but rather a clarification of how the section would apply to this situation. The position of debtors or loan holders with these institutions will not be affected in any way by this amendment. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, this government proposes this change to the Assembly to support the credit union system's ongoing commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

With respect to the second main purpose of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that the Saskatchewan Land Information Services Corporation was created in January of this year. Its mandate is to carry out the automation of the land titles system in the province and to integrate land titles with the provincial geographic information system, commonly known as GIS.

The increased efficiencies resulting from this will provide improved services and better turnaround of land titles operations. And this will be of tremendous benefit to the public as well as to businesses and professionals such as realtors,

lawyers, home builders, surveyors, financial institutions, and the mining industry. As the activities of these and other businesses increase, Mr. Speaker, so too does their contribution to the growth of our provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, all of this will contribute to the diversification of our economy by supporting the growth of our information technology sector and by the sales of new technologies and services leading the way to new, well-paying jobs for our young people right here in Saskatchewan.

The transfer of the personal property registry to the new corporation is an integral part of this process, Mr. Speaker. By linking it with the land titles system, we'll be able to enjoy new-found efficiencies. And these efficiencies will include one-stop access to both the registry and land titles services at the regional land titles offices and access to the personal property registry through the Internet.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill also clarifies that the Lieutenant Governor in Council through regulations will set out the rules about access to, and disclosure of, information contained in the registry. Also, Mr. Speaker, it clarifies that fees for registry services will be paid to the corporation. The information contained in the registry remains the property of the Government of Saskatchewan and the registry, Mr. Speaker, remains a public registry.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes to this Act will be well received by the credit union system and will also be viewed positively by rural communities. This is one of the many examples, Mr. Speaker, of this government seeking to assist in maintaining viable rural communities.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Personal Property Security Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill being presented, Bill 63 I believe, the personal property amendment Act — 66, sorry — has a couple of issues with it that we want to check into further. The bit about the banking end of it and changing that over, especially with the credit unions and things like that, we need a little more time to have a look and see and talk to the different interested parties on that and get their view on it and see whether it is as non-influential as the member opposite says.

As far as the land title and the personal property changeover, we know that Land Titles has been going through a number of changes recently and some big dollar changes. And huge costs are involved there. The members opposite may say it is progress, and I certainly hope it is for the amount of money that they've spent on it. I mean if it wasn't, it would be a real shame and we'd need to be looking into that.

Again on this area we'd like to talk to the people that it's going to be involving the most — as mentioned, a lot of the rural residents and property owners — to see how it's going to affect them and if they have any concerns on it.

So at this point I'd like to adjourn debate on the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 64 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 64, The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act. This Bill formalizes our government's ongoing commitment to responsible fiscal management by creating a fiscal stabilization fund.

Mr. Speaker, long-term success requires the ability to withstand economic volatility and changes in revenues. Our economy is tied to the global economy and to forces that are beyond our control such as the price of . . . commodity prices like wheat or oil, for example.

And we can't control those forces, Mr. Speaker. But sensible fiscal management principles dictate that we can create the capacity to manage them, to try to manage as best we can, and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund provides that capacity.

Since 1925, we've been relying on transfers from the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority and its predecessor, the Saskatchewan Liquor Board, for fiscal stabilization. Enactment of the Bill being given second reading today will continue the tradition of prudent and good fiscal management; but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it will strengthen accountability and openness over the stabilization process — make it more transparent and clear to people what is being done with public funds.

Currently, stabilization is being achieved by adjusting transfers from the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. Profits generated by the authority are recorded in the General Revenue Fund but only as they are withdrawn. Accordingly, the earnings left in the Liquor and Gaming Authority are not reflected in the General Revenue Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the enactment of this Bill will ensure the stabilization process is more fully and openly reported each year. All Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority profit will be reflected in General Revenue Fund income each year. It will be paid into the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker. All expected transfers to and from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is the fund being created by this Bill, will be reported in the annual budget. And all Fiscal Stabilization Fund transactions will be reported in the *Public Accounts*.

(1100)

In addition, Mr. Speaker, this Bill links the principles of government accountability to prudent, long-term fiscal management by introducing a target fund level and long-term plan. This Bill specifies a target level of 5 per cent of the previous year's revenues.

Mr. Speaker, this long-term target will ensure that unexpected events do not jeopardize the government's continued capacity to serve the residents of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill holds the government accountable for long-term fiscal management practices directed towards sustaining that target balance.

The Bill requires that the government publicly present a four-year plan outlining how it will manage the fund to maintain or achieve the target level over the four-year period and to help ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we do not return to deficits or increasing the public debt.

The enactment of this Bill ensures the government will be fully accountable for its budget stabilization plans. This Act comes into force upon assent but will be retroactive and deemed to have been in force on April 1, 2000.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting The Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have debated this particular issue before in the House in estimates and I'm sure that we will be debating it many more times in the House over this session and in the future years.

The government likes to call this the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Actually probably a better name for it is the fancy slush fund because the government claims it's going to use this money to maintain its balances in the budget. That means they're going to park the money there for a period of time until they believe they need it within the Consolidated Fund to balance the books, which is basically what they have been doing with the Crown corporations' money up until this point.

The minister says that all of the profits from the Liquor and Gaming Commission will have to be transferred every year. Well I wait to see that happen because the experience we have with this particular government is they only make those transfers when it's in their political interests — not on an annual basis — but when it's in their personal political interest to do so. And I still have a great deal of suspicion. Mr. Minister, that is exactly how they will continue to operate in the future; not that they will have that many years, Mr. Speaker, to operate in.

In the discussions I've already had with the minister on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, it turns out that there is actually no money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund even though the minister claims that there's over \$400 million there. What is actually in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund or the fancy slush fund is a little note, Mr. Speaker, signed in crayon by the Minister of Finance that I owe me money.

There's no money there. He admitted it, Mr. Speaker, already that they spent the money. So there is no money there for this fund to be established, so the real question is what is the political purpose for having this particular fund in place? What is the particular purpose?

The Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker — who has since left this province — but the Provincial Auditor said the government needs to include in their financial budgets, in their financial statements, all of the numbers of the government, not just the Consolidated Fund, but all of the government's monies including the Crown corporations, including the Liquor and Gaming Commission, and then determine whether or not you have a balanced budget and determine whether or not the

province is as fiscally stable as the Minister of Finance likes to claim that it is.

But they're not doing that, Mr. Speaker. They're shuffling money off into their fancy slush fund. Then they turn around and spend it and they write out a little crayon note that says, we the Government of Saskatchewan owe the fancy slush fund some money. But there's no money there; they've spent it.

And so when they're claiming they use it to stabilize the fiscal resources of this province, what they're doing is trying to stabilize the political resources of the government. And they're failing in that area, Mr. Speaker.

We need to take a very serious look and a very critical look at this particular piece of legislation before it passes this House, Mr. Speaker. Therefore I move adjournment.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

The Deputy Chair: — I'd like to invite the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have sitting beside me, to my left, Dr. Paul Boothe, the deputy minister of Finance, and to his left is Mr. Terry Paton, who's the Provincial Comptroller. Beside me to my right is Mr. Jim Nelson, who's the director of the audit branch in the revenue division of the Department of Finance, and behind Mr. Nelson is Mr. Doug Lambert, who is from the revenue division as well.

Behind me is Mr. Glen Veikle who's the assistant deputy minister and is responsible for the Treasury Broad branch. Behind Dr. Boothe is Mr. Bill Van Sickle, the executive director of the corporate services division of the Department of Finance, and behind Mr. Paton is Ms. Joanne Brockman, who's the executive director of the economic and policy branch of the Department of Finance.

And, Mr. Chair, I would like to move resolution 1, which is:

That a sum not exceeding \$457.627 million be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2001.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to welcome your officials here, Mr. Minister. We had the opportunity of course to meet them once before and we'll proceed, but before I proceed, Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could defer for a moment to my colleague who has an introduction.

Mr. Boyd: — Yes, Mr. Chair, with leave for the introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in the

Speaker's gallery this morning, we are joined by some very special guests of one of our pages, Carla Huber. Her parents and grandmothers are in the gallery: Bob and Sheila Huber from Lipton, and Alma Huber, the grandmother of our page, from Lipton, and Anne Onrait from Balcarres is also joining us here this morning.

Mr. Chair, I want to assure them that their daughter is doing a very excellent job — and granddaughter — is doing an excellent job on behalf of the members of the legislature. And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to the legislature here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, as I mentioned, it just seemed a short while ago we were doing this exercise with at that time we were looking at the interim supply for a two-twelfths period which of course is expiring fairly quickly.

I guess I would like to get an indication from you or from your officials, was this money at this time sufficient? Have we been able to accomplish what you had projected it would do in the 12 . . . in the first two-month period?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I can tell the member it was sufficient and it enabled the government and the third parties to carry out the activities that they need to carry out for that period of time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you. Was there any particular shortfalls in any department or any particular program that was initiated or proposed to be initiated? I think it's important for the public in particular to know that the plans and projections that you've put forward are in fact moving forward and not delayed again for first those two months and now maybe one more month.

Those programs and the initiatives are quite important in our province and I know people are looking forward to them. And I just wondered if there was any particular delay in any one of those programs or initiatives moving forward?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — None that we are aware of, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if you could tell us how much of the money that was granted to each department in the first 12 months' appropriation was actually spent into those departments or was there some move from one department to another?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, we can't move money from one department to another but roughly one-twelfth of a department's annual budget is spent by each department per month.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The particular capital projects that were proposed, and a lot of the areas are

planning to see . . . I'm talking now about projects for schools or for health districts or in fact for highways.

Could you tell us if any of those have started and are in desperate need to keep the interim supply of money coming?

(1115)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I think in a general sense, Mr. Chair, it's fair to say that there are many projects in departments like Health and Highways and work is ongoing on a monthly basis, whether they're in the planning stages or the construction stages. And certainly it's important to maintain a reasonable cash flow to those departments so that they can undertake the capital work that is budgeted for.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. One of the other areas of concern is the . . . in the programs area is the farm aid program. We were just told recently, I think just yesterday, that the cheques have been going out on a pretty regular basis.

Now correct me if I'm wrong. Is that in last year's budget or is that money that will be . . . is projected from this year's budget and therefore have an implication on interim supply?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, there is \$140 million was budgeted in 1998-99 budget as part of AIDA. And so that AIDA money was budgeted in 1988-99 — \$140 million. Then in the budget year '99-2000, which was last year, there was \$40 million I believe in AIDA money, combined with \$40 million I believe from the federal government, for a total of \$80 million with respect to that fiscal year.

And I'm advised that those were the expenditures for those fiscal years under the AIDA program.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Is there any plan to use the one-time, special one-time payment that was anticipated in recent announcements for agriculture programs? Will that be coming out of this particular coming year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as I indicated, Mr. Chair, the money that has gone out was budgeted in 1998-99 and 1999-2000. There also . . . as a result of the recent budget, there was some money earmarked for property tax relief, and that will be going out in this fiscal year, and also will be part of the budget for this fiscal year.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in a situation like interim supply, is that going to cause any particular delays in those programs that are projected for this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. We don't anticipate any delays from what we anticipate to do in this year's budget.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you. That's encouraging because those programs are certainly . . . we're looking forward to them. The farmers and producers in Saskatchewan are desperately in need of those particular programs as you're well aware.

I'd like to talk a little bit about now the revenue side. Where

we've been discussing the expenditures, on the revenue side has the . . . in the first two months of the interim supply covered so far, are they on line, are they in track? Are they in track, in fact, all the departments?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, they are, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chair, in your . . . Mr. Minister, in your recent announcement that the credit rating had been changed to an A level in the province, is there a significance in that particular change? Is there a significant advantage now that we'll be able to see on the revenue side or the expenditure side that might have some influence or significant effect on the interim supply that we're debating now?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think the answer is, not in any way that could be easily quantified, Mr. Chair. And the reason for that is that although we have gone generally speaking to an A credit rating, our bonds have been trading — that is investment in Saskatchewan government bonds are trading now as though we had a AA credit rating. Because we have a better trading experience attracting investors to government bonds than most other jurisdictions in Canada.

So even though our credit rating has improved, we won't necessarily get better interest rates because we've already been getting interest rates as if we were rated as AA even though we're only single A, which sounds kind of odd.

But I must tell you that the credit rating upgrade probably will not save us any interest money in the short term, although in the longer term, again hard to quantify, the fact that Saskatchewan is perceived by outside observers to be a stable province with a good fiscal management, means that it's seen as a better place for investors to invest in government bonds, but also to invest in business because they know that the tax rates are going to be stable; we're not going to be raising taxes; there are no hidden surprises.

And so in the long term it's very good for the province. Hard to quantify. And I don't think it's going to improve the interest that we pay or significantly affect either the revenue side or the expenditure side, because the investment community outside the province has been for some time saying that Saskatchewan is well managed.

And one of the things that I learned, talking to some of the credit rating agencies and investment bankers in the East when I was there, is that they regard the latest budget as having been a step in the right direction which they believe will further improve our credit rating in the future.

And so it's good to get the credit rating upgrades we're getting, which I think we've got six in the last few years. Maybe it's six in the last five years. We're back to the A's from being sort of at the bottom of the pack. So most of them are saying we're headed in the right direction, but I don't see any short-term interest saving for the reasons that I've indicated, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I guess I was thinking in terms of — and I think you've answered — I was thinking in terms of some significant savings in debt servicing and I think you explained that . . . or in investing

opportunities.

The one area that I would like to go back to when I was talking about the particular programs, and that is in the area of health, and that's the Health Transition Fund that was announced earlier on. And my understanding was that some of that money has already been spent and directed toward those health districts that are experiencing some in-debt situations.

Can you tell me how much of that fund has been reallocated to that particular objective and will that continue out of that fund?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I believe, Mr. Chair, it's approximately \$26 million has been sent to Regina, Saskatoon, and East Central Health District. And it is not anticipated at the moment that any more of the transition fund will be spent until we have the opportunity to have a better examination of the health care system.

And I might say that one of the things we do need to look at is the debt situation of the health boards, and if some of them have debt situation that is unsustainable — it doesn't mean that you have to pay the debt off all at once — but it may mean that in assisting them to a transition plan to a sustainable health care system, you need to come up with a debt reduction plan, a plan that tells you how you're going to retire that debt.

And if we did that in the right way, I think we could assist the health districts in providing health services in the sense that they would then have more of their resources available to provide services to the public.

So the debt is definitely a part of what we need to look at in the health system. We also need to look at sustainability, how you retire debt, and how you make sure that the amount of dollars available matches the amount of services that people need and where they need those services to be delivered.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair. If I could follow that a little bit. The amount of money that you indicated that had been allocated to, I think you said, two health districts, there is several more health districts in a debt situation in the province. And I'm wondering if there's a particular reason that those two or a limited number were looked at as opposed to looking at some of the other districts and how that might imply or affect this interim supply that we're discussing now.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — These are very good questions, Mr. Chair, but these are questions which would be more appropriately dealt with in estimates with the Minister of Health. Detailed questions with respect to the expenditures within a department normally would be addressed to the minister in charge of that department.

And while as Minister of Finance I'm pleased to provide the \$150 million of taxpayers' money to the Department of Health for the transition fund, the detailed questions really should be directed to the Minister of Health.

I'll just say to the member that the money has gone to those three health districts because of advice received from the Minister of Health. In so far as other details go on the interim

supply motion, those questions would more appropriately be put in Health estimates.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. We'll certainly be doing that. The question that I was getting to was maybe not so much in detail, but the fact is that these had been . . . payments have already been made. To which ones, I can appreciate your comments about estimates in the particular department. My question was: is that going to affect our discussion here with regarding the second interim supply debate?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well to answer the question, I don't believe that the question is strictly related to the interim supply debate. We're trying to get one-twelfth of the appropriation for each department so that they can carry out the things that they need to do, and the question of the Health Transition Fund is not directly related nor would it fail or succeed based upon what we did with the interim supply Bill.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, as far as the Health Transition Fund goes, we now have another \$12,000,500 allocated for a statutory interim supply. Is there any indication on that . . . those funds will be spent in the next month?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as I indicated, Mr. Chair, that is pending review by the Minister of Health and the Department of Health.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then the Centenary Capital Fund actually was allocated money in the last interim supply as well. Can you give us an idea if that money has been spent, and if so, what on?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. No funds have been expended from the centenary fund, and the . . . so the fund is unexpended at the present time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know that a number of these funds are going to be considered for use for capital expenditures in Education, and the minister has made a number of announcements about capital projects in Education.

Can you explain to us how this centenary fund works with the education capital fund when it comes to how the dollars are being spent. Does the school board apply separately under this fund or are they going to apply just through the Department of Education, the normal funds for capital?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We're going to, Mr. Chair, in answer to the question, use the process that has been established within the Department of Education because we think it's a good process. We don't think we have to reinvent the wheel or have a separate process within government. We think that prioritization of projects according to the existing system is what we should do so that we can continue to have the involvement of the Department of Education and the stakeholders, like the school boards that are presently involved in deciding how the capital money should be spent.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, there are . . . I know that this fund is also going to be used for other projects as well. I'm wondering if right now the criteria has been laid out and the decision has been made how that money

will be spent, and at this time there has been applications put forward for any of the different areas that could be spending this money?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We're still in the process of consulting with stakeholders in each area with respect to what the criteria should be and how the money should be spent. And that process is still underway with the exception, I guess, of the K to 12 education where there already is a good process in criteria in place.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, the fund then is accumulating, both in the transition fund for health care and in the centenary fund. So as the money is allocated and kept separate, does that mean that there is interest gaining on that money at this time?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. The funds are not kept separate in the sense that they're not drawn out until they're needed. So what this means is that they would have access to the funds. It doesn't mean they necessarily would get the funds or spend the funds — it means that they would have access to the funds.

So because the funds haven't been sent to them or set out, the funds would not be accruing interest.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Then at the end of the year perhaps all these funds are not spent, is there going to be an allocation of interest put into this fund so that you can say a percentage of it wasn't spent, there's this much money set aside? Will there be additional money for the fund for next year?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, the answer is no. In accordance with, you know, good principles of cash management if the funds were not needed, the funds would not be drawn out, no interest would be paid on them; we wouldn't go into operating debt, for example. And if the funds were not used, the funds simply . . . that budgetary allocation would simply lapse.

Having said that, it's our intent that the funds will be used.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I note in the material that was sent over that there hasn't been any money allocated for paying interest, servicing the public debt. Can you explain to me and to everyone why the interest isn't paid on a monthly basis, or is there just a set time in the year that all of the interest is paid?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It's a statutory requirement that the interest be paid and that's set out in law. And it's not part of an interim supply motion, nor is any other statutory payment, because those payments are already set out in law as distinct from requiring resolution of the legislature.

Ms. Draude: — And, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, then I understand that under Education then nearly 20 per cent of it is a statutory amount — 103 million or thereabouts. Can you tell me what the statutory amount is? Is that wages?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, that represents the pension obligation that has to be paid from the General Revenue Fund to fund the pension obligations that we have to the teachers, I believe, arising out of the old plan as distinct from the new plan, which

is . . . The old plan is an unfunded liability plan and payments have to be made by statute to ensure there's enough money in that plan to meet the obligations to pay the pension obligations to teachers.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then if I follow that further, then that would mean that the 681,000 under Executive Council, '99, under Finance and so on — is that all pension fund money?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, Mr. Chair, the member would not be correct in making that assumption. All of the items listed as statutory amounts are statutory amounts, but not all of them would be pension amounts. In the case of Executive Council, the \$681,000 represents salaries of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Draude: — Then, Mr. Minister, if I can ask you then, could you advise us what the 99 million is under Finance, the 7 million under Justice, and so on, so we have an understanding of where this statutory amount is being spent?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, in answer to the question, Mr. Chair, in Education, the statutory amount is the pension obligation for the teachers' pension plan.

Executive Council is the salaries of members of the legislature who are also members of Executive Council.

Finance is largely pensions, not entirely but mainly pension obligations.

Justice is court services and judges' salaries among other things, but primarily those two things.

Municipal Affairs is a variety of statutory obligations including the various authorities like the Wakamow Valley Authority, the Wascana Centre Authority, and so on.

The Legislative Assembly amount is for the members of the legislature salaries, the salaries not related to duties of members of the Executive Council.

And I believe that's most of them except the Chief Electoral Officer whose entire allocation is in fact statutory.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask another question. And maybe with your indulgence just for maybe my understanding, when we're looking at the budget estimates, then there's the statutory amounts and the amounts to be voted on, how is the one-twelfth interim supply calculated? Do you have some preferences? Is it a straight calculation, or do you have preferences from department to department as to, from their view, what is needed and maybe others don't?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No. It's a straight one-twelfth calculation. You take the amount of money allocated to the department for the year pursuant to the budget, deduct the amount that is statutory because that will be paid out according to law. The rest needs to be voted by the legislature.

And with respect to the rest, you simply divide that by 12 and

then the monthly allocation is that figure. And it's the same for each department listed.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate the material that was circulated recently. And just looking at it on the second page under the heading, lending and investing, there is a one-twelfth of the amount to be voted under Agriculture and Food, for instance, what would be the lending and investment opportunity or initiative there?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, it's investment in Crown agricultural land held for resale, \$400,000; and advances for the Agri-Food equity fund, \$10 million. So mainly monies to go into the Ag-Food equity fund to be used to try to mainly encourage value-added initiatives in agriculture, which I think . . . I know the member is familiar with. That's the bulk of their lending activities.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I suspect that the same kind of things apply then in lending and investing to Economic and Co-operative Development, as an example. It's an important item, in my view, in this province to get that economic development at a level where I think the province can start taking advantage of the results of the economic development. The response you had earlier partially answers that I think, but is there something particular with the Economic and Co-operative Development?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes. I think, Mr. Chair, that's generally an accurate statement that the member has made. In Economic and Co-operative Development most of those lending activities would be related to the small-business development program and also the northern development fund.

(1145)

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I assume that the one-twelfth interim supply would keep those on track because I think those are really quite important. I think that was really supplementary to a question I had asked earlier, but would you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I can confirm that. I think that's a correct statement, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, under the heading again, lending and investing, it would seem odd from my vocabulary, investing and lending in Highways and Transportation. Does that mean the capital projects for Highways?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That relates, Mr. Chair, to the Canada agriculture assistance program. I think it's referred to as the CAIP (Canada/Saskatchewan Agri-Infrastructure Program) program. And it relates to the money that would be advanced with respect to short-line railways.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have one or two other questions but I would like to, if I could, Mr. Chair, defer to one of my colleagues to ask another question.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the minister. Mr. Minister, while this question may not relate directly to the interim supply Bill we're debating here this morning, however

going back to the budget speech, I believe you indicated on July 1 there would be a reduction in the flat tax. And as I understand it, the last time we had a reduction in a tax because there's an Act in regards to the flat tax . . . I'm just wondering if we need to have an amendment to the current Income Tax Act in regards to that reduction, and if so, where is that Act? Is it going to be coming forward shortly so we can deal with that matter?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the member is quite correct, Mr. Chair. The reduction to the flat tax will require an amendment to The Income Tax Act, and I'm advised by the officials that we should have the legislation prepared very shortly. They still are in consultation with the officials from the Department of Justice with respect to the drafting of the Bill.

But obviously we need to present that Bill fairly shortly. And in fact, there may be other changes to The Income Tax Act consequent upon the budget which may be done at the same time.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Deputy Chair, just a follow-up question. I think the minister can appreciate some opposition members, in debating and planning for session and debate, that the sooner we have the legislation . . . I think the indication was before session started there'd be somewhat of around, give or take, 80 pieces of legislation. And the concern we have is how many pieces of legislation are going to be dropped on our lap just at, to what would be considered the last moment as we get closer to the summer months.

So I think we'd just like to have an indication as to when we could expect that. You've indicated that you're currently working on drafting it, but if we could have a rough idea when that piece of legislation would indeed be coming forward.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I appreciate the point the member is making, Mr. Chair, and I agree with the point. And we need to get the legislation into the House just as soon as we can. And that requires consultation with the Department of Justice to prepare the Bill; also consultation with the House Leader and the Opposition House Leader.

And all I can tell the member right now is I appreciate the point he is making. We need to get the legislation before the House as soon as we can. And I'll undertake to ask the officials to please, in fact, produce the legislation and get it into the House just as soon as we can. And we'll endeavour to do that and make every best effort to do that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Having said that, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the Minister as well, while we're asking for and we'd like to know when legislation is coming forward, it doesn't necessarily mean that the opposition is winding up the questioning in this Assembly. It could take us quite a while yet to address all those concerns. But just to remind the minister that if legislation drags on and it comes in later, it certainly just adds to number of days we're going to be sitting here in the Assembly.

One other question as well, Mr. Minister. While we're dealing with that, I'm just wondering — I understand the Chief Electoral Officer has indicated as well for political parties to have tax credits, there would need to be a change or an

amendment to The Income Tax Act as well. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if that would be included in the changes that you will be bringing forward.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — My understanding, Mr. Chair, is that amendments would be required to The Income Tax Act and I believe also to The Election Act, 1996 or one of the elections Acts — I'm not sure if it's The Election Act, 1996 or the election expenses Act, but in any event two pieces of legislation. That would be required.

I am not actually the minister in charge of the Chief Electoral office and those matters. I believe that is the president of the Executive Council. And so I can't say; it's not my duty or responsibility to say what position of the government is. But certainly I understand the member has an interest in the question, and I have every confidence that the members of the government are very interested in discussing that question with the opposition.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees. I'm pleased to note that the minister is interested in discussing it. I'm hoping he'll be interested in actually doing something about it.

My question to the minister is in relationship to the servicing of the public debt. The public debt under this one-twelfth does not show any funds going to that particular purpose. Previous to these interim supply, we had two-twelfths done last month. Was any money allocated there to servicing of the public debt?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the public debt, the servicing of the public debt is not dependent upon the interim supply vote because we pay the public debt pursuant to statutory obligations to do so. I should explain to the House, Mr. Chair, that the public debt is not paid one-twelfth at a time or once a year. It's paid pursuant to contractual arrangements that are arrived at with people that invest in government bonds.

And the obligation to pay the interest on the debt and when it shall be paid will vary depending upon the nature of the debt and the nature of the obligation that arises with each person to whom we owe the money.

But the statute, the law requires that we pay interest on the public debt. This will be done regardless of what happens to the interim supply. No money will be allocated to the public debt from the interim supply. It's all already allocated, and the obligation to pay it arises by statute.

So I don't know what I can say other than that. It simply is all paid by way of statutory obligation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That question was leading to this question.

We have seen on the financial market some changes, significant for the last few years, changes to the interest rates and to the exchange rates with US dollars. What kind of an impact is that having on the repayment of the provincial debt? How much of an increase are those changes?

The interest rates I believe went up 50 basis points this week.

The interest . . . the exchange rate to the Canadian dollar has been dropping in relationship to the American dollar. What impact is that having on our repayments and how much additional money is that going to cost us?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The short-term changes to the interest rates don't necessarily have the impact that you might assume at first glance because most of our debt is due on an average of eight years from now. So that the interest rates that we pay are generally speaking, set, and they don't go up just because the Federal Reserve in the United States or the Bank of Canada may raise the interest rates.

So it's difficult to say that a short-term raise in the interest rates today, for example, will increase our cost because we may be in effect locked in for an average of eight years, Mr. Chair — if the member sees what I mean, and I think he can. So by the time the debt is actually payable and we renegotiate at a different interest rate, the rates may have come down. That's my first point.

My second point is that one of the things that the Department of Finance, in particular the treasury and debt management branch, has done a very good job of in the last few years is decreasing the amount of debt that we owe in US dollars. And we're at about 80 per cent of our debt in Canadian dollars, 20 per cent in US dollars, so that we've minimized our exposure to a low Canadian dollar.

But having said that, generally speaking, for every 1 cent, every 1 cent change in the dollar — every 1 cent the Canadian dollar drops — the interest cost for the province of Saskatchewan will increase by about \$3.2 million. And the changes that have occurred thus far with respect to interest rates and exchange rates, we don't think will appreciably affect the forecast in the budget for interest costs.

But certainly it can have some impact, not so much as would throw us off the targets that we've set out there, largely for the reasons I've indicated — that our debt tends to be negotiated on a longer term, firstly. And secondly, we've minimized our exposure to American dollar debt by going mainly to Canadian dollar debt in the last few years.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the things though that exchange rate does have is the current US debt that is . . . debt that's being held in the US. And the interest rate has an impact on any renewals that may be taking place. Some of the debt is probably rolling over continuously, not all of it obviously, but different segments. And that which is being rolled over at the current time will be impacted by the current interest rates.

So how much debt is being rolled over at this particular time? And when you're considering the exchange rates, what was the dollar base that the budget was based on when it was originally proposed?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I'm advised that this year we will be renewing about \$1.6 billion in debt, and that none of that debt is US dollar debt.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What was the

US dollar base that was used to calculate the repayments?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — 68.03.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, that's all the questions we have at this particular time. Therefore we're prepared to allow this Bill to move forward.

I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in today.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First I'd like to thank my officials for assisting me today. And I would also like to thank members of the opposition for their co-operation with respect to the interim supply.

And with that, Mr. Chair, I would like to move resolution no. 2 which is:

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, the sum of \$457,627,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolutions be now read a first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move:

That Bill No. 72, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 2001, be now introduced and read the first time.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly and under rule 55(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Leave granted.

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

ROYAL ASSENT

At 12:05 p.m. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

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

Bill No. 301 - The Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan Act

Bill No. 302 - The Renaming of The Regina Golf Club Act

Bill No. 303 - The Saskatchewan Roman Catholic Dioceses Reorganization Act

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 72 - An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 2001

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 12:09 p.m.

The Speaker: — Hon. members, kindly enjoy your weekends and come back safely. This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

On page 1299 of *Hansard* No. 45A, Wednesday, May 24, 2000 please correct the following paragraph:

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.

To read:

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, **djembe** drummer with the Cathedral Village Drum Circle — I'm afraid I'm a demographic group of one, Mr. Speaker.

We apologize for this error.