

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to present a petition on behalf of the communities of Lanigan and Watrous — the people there concerned about possible closure of their hospitals. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

This petition is signed by the good citizens of Young, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions on behalf of citizens throughout the Lanigan and Watrous area who are petitioning the government to retain their hospitals. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Young.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today to retain Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Young and Watrous and Leroy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of people concerned about the future of the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

Signatures on this particular petition are all from the community

of Young.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition regarding hospital care.

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the community of Young.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition in regards to the health care system and people concerned in the Lanigan and Watrous area. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take necessary steps to ensure that the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

Mr. Speaker, and this petition is signed by the folks from Lanigan and Drake.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the futures of the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

And this is signed by citizens of Young, Saskatchewan.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of people in the Lanigan and Watrous area concerned about their hospital.

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Young, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of people who are very concerned about health care in this province. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

And this is signed by residents from Colonsay.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present, to do with the state of health care in the province. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

The community involved, Mr. Speaker, is Young, Young, Young, and Young.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

These prayers, these petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the people of Young, Zelma.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospital remains open.

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

Signed by the people from Young, Saskatchewan.

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures are from the town of Davidson.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens concerned about the closure of hospitals. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

The citizens are from Young and Watrous.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition this afternoon in regards to keeping roads open in this province. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to keep the boundary road near Okema Beach open.

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

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present today that has to do with cellular service, telephone service. 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.

And the petitioners come from the community of Strasbourg and Regina.

I do so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity to rise in this Assembly to bring forth a petition regarding the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

And the petitioners are from Strasbourg and Lanigan.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the possible closure of the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the

Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

The petition is signed by individuals from the community of Young.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great responsibility that I rise to present another petition on behalf of the good citizens of Young, Saskatchewan. The petition is to retain Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

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

To halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities;

To cause the governments to reduce fuel taxes;

To provide reliable cellular service in Strasbourg, Duval, Govan, and Bulyea;

To ensure the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Tobacco Control

The Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Kowalsky, Chair of the Special Committee on Tobacco Control presents the first report of the said committee which is hereby tabled.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and through you, members of the Legislative Assembly, I'm very pleased today to rise as Chair of your committee to present this report, as well as to make a few remarks with respect to the report.

The first thing I want to do is say that this report is the cumulative property and work — intellectual property and work — of seven MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from this Assembly and the staff that worked and co-operated with them.

I would like to at this time to mention who the MLAs are. I

served as Chair of the committee, Mr. Speaker. The Vice-Chair of the committee was the member from Estevan. Other members of the committee were: the member from Saskatoon Sutherland; the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy; the member from Saltcoats, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, and the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we had assigned to the committee several staff members. Mr. Greg Putz and Ms. Donna Bryce, Clerks from the Clerk's office; Monique Lovatt, also from the Clerk's office. We had *Hansard* staff and sound crews who I would like to acknowledge.

And I would also like to acknowledge, and with leave of the Assembly, introduce Ms. Tanya Hill who was the research officer. And I'm not sure if Tanya is the galleries. There she is waving, so I want to acknowledge Tanya's work on this.

Mr. Speaker, our committee conducted a series of meetings and hearings around the province. We heard . . . and we went to several schools as well. We were rather impressed, Mr. Speaker, by some of the . . . by a lot of the testimony that was given.

What particularly impressed us was new knowledge that we gained about the impact of tobacco use in Saskatchewan, particularly the fact that there are up to 1,600 deaths attributed to tobacco use annually; that it is a very addictive substance, more addictive than most of us thought going into this work; and the illnesses that arise from it; and the fact that the total cost to the province both direct and indirect is estimated to be \$266 million.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the work that we did is produced in this report — 33 recommendations which we feel, if implemented, will go a long way to reducing tobacco use in the province over time.

We understand, Mr. Speaker, that a move in this direction would require a societal change in attitude towards tobacco; that it's not something that can be done overnight. It's a gradual process so hence this is our first report. The committee will intend to carry on its work into the fall and next year if necessary.

I want to just give a very brief outline of the major items, Mr. Speaker, for these . . . to the members of the Assembly at this time. The major recommendations, first one is that the Department of Health establish a comprehensive strategy, including the setting of goals and timelines for when this strategy should be achieved. We're recommending that the goal be to reduce tobacco use by 50 per cent within five years and then another 50 per cent the subsequent five years.

There will be some money needed to do this, Mr. Speaker, and we're recommending that \$5 million be allotted, and this be generated by taxing tobacco and cigarettes at an additional 10 cents per pack which would yield that money.

The emphasis of the report is on youth, Mr. Speaker. We believe that it is our youth who carried the ball for us or started it and initiated the whole movement in Saskatchewan in environmental protection. We also believe that the youth of

Saskatchewan once again showed leadership when it came to making new rules and complying to new rules with respect to drinking and driving.

And we believe, Mr. Speaker, that through leadership of groups that are now formed in the schools, like Students Working Against Tobacco and other groups, that they can help us on the road to reduce tobacco consumption, particularly amongst youth, and this will lead also to less tobacco use right across the piece, Mr. Speaker.

Accordingly then we're recommending that the school curriculum have a portion, a greater portion of education, mandatory education, every year from K to grade 9 on tobacco use; that the high school curriculum also, in areas of phys. ed. and health, have a mandatory portion; that there be community education conducted by the health boards; that there be public education conducted by the Department of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that we need to denormalize tobacco use. One of the ways we want to do this is to recommend to this Assembly that there be a prohibition and there be a restriction on the age that a person is able to purchase and possess tobacco. And that age be anybody under 18 should not be able to purchase or possess tobacco, similar to our liquor laws.

We believe that there should be no smoking on school property altogether. We are also recommending that any vendor who is now currently selling tobacco products and wishes to continue to sell tobacco products would have to apply for a licence. And that any tobacco sales should be done from a counter or a cupboard that is out of sight to the public and particularly to any place where young children access.

The last recommendation, Mr. Speaker, is that smoking be prohibited in all public places in Saskatchewan with the exception of bars, casinos, restaurants, and bingo halls, and that the committee look at and work in co-operation with the hospitality industry to make recommendations into the future as how we can work towards having our society accept the fact that we want to reduce tobacco use in those establishments as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's kind of coincidental that today happens to be World No-Tobacco Day, May 31 — World No-Tobacco Day which is a day sponsored by the World Health Organization. Their motto is "Tobacco kills — don't be duped."

When we are recommending this through this report, our recommendations, Mr. Speaker, our objective is, and the message is to our youth and the people of Saskatchewan, "Be stronger, live longer, drop tobacco."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Accordingly, it's my pleasure to move, seconded by the member from Estevan:

That the first report of the Special Committee on Tobacco Control be now concurred in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Vice-Chair it is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to second the motion put forward by the hon. member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you are well aware, the Special Committee on Tobacco Control has been working diligently and has travelled extensively throughout our province to hear what the people of Saskatchewan have to say on this very important issue. Mr. Speaker, although the committee has made significant progress over the past few months, there is still a lot of work to do.

And at this time I would like to commend all of my colleagues on the committee, the legislative staff, and researcher for all their hard work and dedication, and to thank all of those individuals for their very well-thought-out presentations.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to second the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of a Bill entitled The Sex Offender Registry Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 55 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: (1) were officials from Saskatchewan Government Insurance consulted about who should be appointed to the review committee studying the personal injury protection program; if so, who was consulted, when were they consulted, why were they consulted, who consulted with them, and what advice was offered by SGI; and (2) which groups or individuals were consulted by the minister or other government officials regarding who was appointed to this committee?

I also give notice that I shall on day 55 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: of the three remaining members of the personal injury protection program review committee as of May 30, 2000, which were once employed by SGI; which are or have been involved with organizations which have received funding from SGI; which have been involved in other Saskatchewan government review committees and please name those committees.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce a good friend and a former member of the Legislative

Assembly. And at the time he was here, between 1971 and '82, he, for a period, was the youngest Finance minister in Canada and, I might remind all members, balanced the books, and the economy of the province was very, very strong.

I'm sure all members will want to welcome Elwood Cowley to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, people that are in our galleries that have travelled here from all across the province. I am delighted that licensed practical nurses are visiting the legislature today to witness the second reading of their legislation. In particular, I'd like to welcome Noella Hart, who is the president of the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, to the legislature, as well as Ede Leeson, who is the executive director of SALPN.

I would ask all licensed practical nurses in our galleries to stand in order that we can recognize their presence here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to join with the Health minister in welcoming all of the health care professional licensed practical nurses that are here this afternoon to watch the very first step of a very important bit of legislation that not only affects their scope of practice and their terms of employment, but also affects the delivery of health care right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, these are very important people in the delivery of health care service in the province and I certainly would like to join in welcoming them here today. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to join the Deputy Premier in a brief welcome to a constituent of mine, Mr. Elwood Cowley. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to members of the Assembly and to you as well, Mr. Speaker, a number of special guests that we have in the west gallery as well.

Present with us today are a number of irrigators . . . are here to listen to the second reading speech of The Irrigation Amendment Act that we will move later today. And these are obviously some of the key stakeholders who are involved in a number of the consultation meetings where the amendments were discussed.

And I just ask them to rise at the very end just as I've introduce the last of the them.

Very quickly, with us today in the west gallery is Ron Tittle, Elias Hofer, Dan Hofer, Mark Oram, Bill Karwandy, Ken Plummer, Jarrod Klassen, James Harvey, Sandra Bathgate, Barry Akins, Lorne Jackson, Gordon Kent, Don Dean and from SaskWater, as well we have Stephanie Choma, Bill Vavra, and John Linsley from the Outlook office.

So if I could have all of you please rise and be acknowledged.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party, bring greetings and welcome our guests here from the Saskatchewan Irrigation Projects Association. I'm sure everybody here will give them a warm welcome. And if they choose to meet with me afterwards, I'd be quite welcome to.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While my colleague was introducing the licensed practical nurses and they were all standing, and I want to welcome them too. This person was not standing.

In your gallery is an individual by the name of Jackie Sedley. She's the public representative on the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, and she has a long history of working with children in our province, Mr. Speaker.

She's been a director of a community day care for many years in Yorkton, managed her own child care facility for many years, and has been sort of home for many families and children in Yorkton over the years. And she's a loyal volunteer and gives of her time unselfishly for many community groups. So I'd ask Jackie to please rise and the rest of the Assembly kindly welcome her.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Among the Saskatchewan Irrigation Project Association members here today are three people I would like to recognize specifically.

As you know and have experienced, the Cypress Hills are a long way from Regina and I don't get visitors from my constituency in this House very often. So I want to take this opportunity to especially recognize Ron Tittle, Don Dean, and Willie Karwandy, all from the constituency of Cypress Hills.

In a former life, I was a salesman for a John Deere dealership and Ron Tittle was my best customer. Don Dean was my competing salesman, and Mr. Karwandy was a customer I just hadn't got to yet.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly, the Social 10 class from the Spring Valley School. Mr. Blair Sands there seated in the east gallery, and accompanied by chaperone, Ms. Ashworth.

I hope that they've had an interesting and educational visit to the building today and that they enjoy the proceedings here and that all members of this Assembly will welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Trans Canada Trail Celebration in Outlook

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Monday I had the honour of attending the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 celebrations held in Outlook. The town of Outlook is one of several communities in my constituency that will see a portion of the Trans Canada Trail pass through their area.

Mr. Speaker, the mere scale of this Canada-wide recreational trail is most impressive. Spanning over 16,000 kilometres, this is the longest shared-use trail in the world. It will join the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific oceans.

Not only will this nationwide trail be used for walking but also cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

I would like to congratulate all of the water carriers from the many communities across my constituency. These communities are of course Outlook, as well as Elbow, Mistusinne, Dundurn, Hanley, Keeler, Marquis, Tuxford, and Tugaske, along with Buffalo Pound, Danielson, and Douglas provincial parks.

By taking part in this relay, which transports water from our three oceans to our nation's capital, these dedicated and patriotic people will ensure Saskatchewan's place at the historic opening of the Trans Canada Trail, on September 9.

In conclusion I would like to once again congratulate the organizers of this celebration in Outlook. Their noble work will help the Trans Canada Trail become a reality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ponteix, Saskatchewan Twinned with Ponteix, France

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the town of Ponteix, Saskatchewan and the community of Ponteix-Aydat, France, have celebrated the twinning of their two respective communities. And in a ceremony held last Thursday, the two communities signed a pact of friendship.

And, Mr. Speaker, the town of Ponteix and the village of Ponteix in France, have a history that goes back to 1906, when Father Albert Royer, with a number of settlers from France, established a new community in our province. And that community he founded was first called Notre Dame d'Auvergne. And it was then changed later, in 1914, to Ponteix.

Mr. Speaker, Ponteix is located in the Wood River constituency between Assiniboia and Shaunavon, and approximately 60 per cent of the residents speak the French language.

A delegation from Ponteix-Aydat, France, arrived in Saskatchewan earlier this month. The group included 15 grade

5 school children, and having toured the province of Saskatchewan and other parts of Western Canada, attended the celebration in Ponteix last Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate these two communities on the twinning and the friendship that exists between our province and the great country of France.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agricultural Input Management Program

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Saskatchewan is widely known for its innovation. And my constituency is at the top of the list, I believe.

While this government is slow to develop programs that are beneficial to farmers, businesses within the farm communities realize the value of flexibility and the importance of agriculture to our province.

Today I would like to recognize three co-ops from my area — Naicam, Spalding, and Lake Lenore. Last year the members of the co-op board, staff, and general manager Gordon Dmytruk recognized a problem in rural Saskatchewan, a financing problem to help cover the crop-input expenses which would allow farmers the flexibility to sell their products in various markets.

A year ago they piloted a financial program called agricultural input management which is now available to producers right across Western Canada. They talked to various credit unions and banks, and the TD (Toronto Dominion) in Toronto was interested in the idea and met with the boards and general manager. Together they developed a program.

Farmers can apply at their local co-op for a revolving line of credit to cover crop-input expenses. Credit amounts range from 10,000 to \$250,000 and participants have up to one year to repay.

Congratulations, Mr. Dmytruk, and the boards of the Spalding, Naicam, and Lake Lenore co-ops. Your foresight innovation not only meets the needs of the farm community and your businesses but ensures that rural Saskatchewan will be viable into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Michael Lypka Awarded Gold Medal in Dentistry

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, spring is a time for university convocation. A time in which students are recognized and rewarded for their dedication and determination. A time in which our Saskatchewan students show the world that they have the right stuff and that they are the future.

To find an outstanding example of the kind of right stuff we have in Saskatchewan we need look no further than your constituency, Mr. Speaker, to Michael Alexander Lypka of Balcarres.

Michael, in this year's convocation at the University of Saskatchewan, was awarded the gold medal in dentistry. He is one of the most accomplished individuals ever to graduate from that college, and at 23 he is also one of the youngest.

This young man has excelled not only in dentistry where he was awarded numerous scholarships and awards — eight in his final year alone — but he was also a member of the CIAU (Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union) All Canadian All Academic team for five consecutive years.

Mr. Speaker, as we work in government to make Saskatchewan a force in this new millennium, it is people like Michael Lypka we can place our hope and confidence in, knowing that the future will be in capable hands.

I ask all members to join with me, and I'm sure with you, Mr. Speaker, in expressing our congratulations to Michael and wishing him all the very best in his future endeavours.

Royal Canadian Legion Ladies' Auxiliary Division 5 70th Anniversary

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the Assembly to congratulate and commend the Royal Canadian Legion Ladies' Auxiliary Division 5 on the celebration of their 70th anniversary which took place in Humboldt last Saturday, May 27.

The mandate of the ladies' auxiliary is basically to support the veterans of their local branch. However, in addition, it should be noted that they work diligently to support Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and other youth organizations. They have also taken it upon themselves many times to support their communities in various ways.

For example, in Humboldt, through a variety of fundraising efforts, the ladies auxiliary contributed \$35,500 over a five-year period to support St. Elizabeth's Hospital. As well, the Humboldt day care and the Humboldt Aquatic Centre were beneficiaries of new playground equipment and a waterslide for youth respectively.

Mr. Speaker, these women are very down-to-earth, hard-working people. They are dedicated to community development, and they deserve to have a great deal of credit for their initiatives and their work to support community and youth.

I would personally like to thank the ladies, and I wish them the very best for continued success in your . . . in their ongoing work. And I ask the Assembly also to show some support and appreciation to all ladies auxiliaries of the Legion in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Seeding and Spring Credit Advance Program Update

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have some bad news and some very good news. First the bad news: I've not yet completed my seeding. I know the member for Watrous will be concerned.

Now for the very good news: the members of this side of the House would like to congratulate — I'll try that again — congratulate Saskatchewan farmers on seeding more than 95 of this year's crop. This is well ahead of the five-year average of 67 per cent and last year's progress of 68 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to update the House on the Canada-Saskatchewan adjustment activities. Of the applications that were mailed out on April 13, 2000, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance has received back from farmers about 46,000 applications, and of those have processed just over 44,000. This means, Mr. Speaker, that SCIC (Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation) has paid out approximately 95 per cent of the applications they received back.

To date just over 182 million has been paid out to Saskatchewan farmers to help with this spring's seeding. This 175 million is in addition to the 40 million in tax cuts on farm fuel, education, and land tax, 300 million available under the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program, and 400 million available under the spring credit advance program.

Mr. Speaker, the good news is that these programs have been put in place, the programs are working, and we congratulate the farmers for their successes so far.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

World War I Veteran Recognized

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at a time when we are remembering those who fought and died for this country during the world wars, and particularly the First World War with the ceremony in Vimy Ridge laying to rest the soldier found some 80 years after his death, and the historic ceremony that transported an unknown soldier from his resting place in Vimy Ridge back to his home of Canada and his final resting place at the foot of the National War Memorial in Ottawa, I would like to recognize another brave soldier from the First World War.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mr. Harry Kulyk of Blaine Lake. Mr. Kulyk is a First World War veteran who served with the 218th Battalion in England, the 6th Canadian Field Ambulance in France, and following the armistice the Occupation Army in Germany. Mr. Kulyk will be turning 100 years old in July of this year.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 26, Mr. Kulyk attended a ceremony at the Royal Canadian Legion, Nutana Branch in Saskatoon where he was presented with the Legion of Honour, France's highest national order. He was also presented with the John McCrae Medallion and a certificate of appreciation from Queen Elizabeth II.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to give recognition to Mr. Kulyk for his dedication to his country and his determination to carry out his duties. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Kulyk on receiving the well-deserved honours he was presented on the 26th, and thank him for his services in World War I.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Maintenance of Highway 18

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we now have a by-election on in the Wood River constituency and the NDP (New Democratic Party) and the Liberals are fighting over who gets the credit for the NDP record. I'm wondering right now who wants the credit for Highway No. 18?

Mr. Speaker, Highway 18 is so broken up that the Climax School will no longer run a school bus down that road. It's simply too unsafe for Saskatchewan school children to travel down this Saskatchewan highway. Mr. Speaker, this is a disgrace; and it speaks volumes about the years of neglect faced by the people in that part of the province.

To the Minister of Highways today. Mr. Minister, how could you allow this to happen? How could you allow Highway 18 to fall apart so badly when it's no longer safe for children in a school bus?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course we're always concerned about public safety, and that's one of the reasons why we have invested the highest amount of dollars in highways and transportation in Saskatchewan's history — at \$250 million, Mr. Speaker.

That's an increase of 6.6 per cent over last year. Specifically on the highway that the member refers to, it's my understanding that a contract has been tendered and will be awarded shortly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even though we have the largest increase ever in the Highways' budget, and we've reached stratospheric heights with that, most of the new money isn't even going to roads.

Mr. Speaker, school children used to learn that the three Rs stood for reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. School children in Climax know now that the three Rs stands for Roy's rotten roads.

Mr. Minister, I want you to think about how the people around Climax feel. Now you just became a father recently, and I want you to think about putting your children on a school bus and then wondering whether they'll make it to school or not.

Mr. Minister, the broken pavement and potholes were so huge that the bus couldn't avoid them when there was oncoming traffic. Mr. Minister, how would you feel as a parent if your children were on that school bus?

Mr. Minister, this is a serious question. The road is a disgrace. How could you allow this to happen?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I'm certainly concerned about public safety, it's unlikely that I'd ever send my son to a school in Cypress Hills.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, also I want to again . . . I want to report again, Mr. Speaker, that we have, we have this year the highest Highway's budget in Saskatchewan's history at \$250 million. We are concerned about public safety, and for that reason, we've increased the Highway's budget by 6.6 per cent.

But I find it ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition members, day after day, come into the House with petitions asking us to lower the gas tax and, at the same time, put more money into highways. It absolutely makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

We have tendered for Highway 18 and there will be improvements on that road shortly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the reason we suggest the lowering of the gas tax is because most of it isn't getting to the roads anyway.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a new problem in that area; that highway has been dangerous for years. Tonight in Val Marie, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) will honour Dave Kleinsasser of the Sand Lake Hutterite Colony. Two years ago, Dave Kleinsasser saved a Moose Jaw woman's life after the car she was driving hit a pothole, lost control, left the road, and flipped upside down under water.

Fortunately, Mr. Kleinsasser was in the right place at the right time and as a result, a life was saved that could have been lost because of that deadly stretch of highway. I might add — a neglected stretch of highway.

Mr. Minister, why has it taken so long to fix this dangerous highway?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — If the member needed any clarification, by the way, on why I wouldn't send my son to Cypress, it's just a little far to bus him from the Meadow Lake constituency. As well it happens that I happen to know the principal involved there and he comes from my constituency so I know they have a very good educational system there.

As well again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the member that I'm aware of the highway and I know it needs improvement, and that is the reason we've tendered the contract. And I understand it's being awarded either today or tomorrow and work will begin on that highway within the next few days.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskWater Investment in Potato Industry

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for the SaskWater Corporation.

Yesterday the spring report of the Acting Provincial Auditor removed all doubt that SaskWater is to blame for the loss of millions of taxpayers' dollars. The auditor says, and I quote:

We found problems with SaskWater's rules and procedures for safeguarding . . . controlling public money.

He also states, and I quote again:

We found SaskWater's rules and procedures for managing its investment in the potato industry were not adequate, from 1996 through most of 1998.

Mr. Minister, this is a major investment for the SaskWater Corporation involving tens of millions of dollars. How do you explain that proper procedures weren't in place to manage it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are well aware that it was a major investment with their . . . part of the reason that we invested out in that area, as I've said many times in the legislature before, is there were hundreds of millions of dollars, literally hundreds of millions of dollars, invested in infrastructure by way of irrigation, both federally and provincially.

We had in most cases depressed cereal grain prices. It was clearly the view of this government — and I think with good vision — that we should diversify in agriculture. And that's the reason that we invested in irrigation and also into the production of potato prices . . . potatoes, I should say, Mr. Speaker.

The auditor's findings clearly indicate that there were problems but he also notes that there were substantial improvements made by the corporation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The auditor's report indicates SaskWater spent millions more than they planned when they built the storage facilities in 1997. They spent millions more than the conditions placed on them by CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) specified.

They did no risk or cost benefit analysis. They set no clear objectives. They did no investment evaluation along the way. They did no market research. In other words they went ahead like a bull in a china shop without any idea what they were doing. They put taxpayers' money at risk, local businesses at risk, and the potato industry at risk. Mr. Minister, this is no way to operate a business.

Who were the people overseeing this investment by SaskWater, and are they still employed by the corporation?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again I say, Mr. Speaker, that we realize that mistakes were made and we've learned from that. And clearly in the auditor's report — and I'm going to quote directly from the auditor's report — here's what he says:

In our opinion, for the year ended December 31, 1999:

SaskWater's financial statements are reliable;

He says:

SaskWater had adequate rules and procedures to safeguard and control its assets, except (Mr. Speaker) that SaskWater should set appropriate security policies for its information technology systems and data; and

SaskWater complied with the authorities governing its activities relating to financial reporting, safeguarding assets, revenue raising, spending, borrowing and investing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the auditor's scathing report on the actions of SaskWater and SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) shows that the taxpayers lost \$9 million in 1999 on the failed potato venture. But it's really too bad the auditor couldn't examine the full loss to the province.

There are Saskatchewan businesses who were contracted by SPUDCO for supplies and services that also lost millions. Greenhouse operators, custom harvesters, fertilizer dealers, trucking companies, all suffered by your mismanagement of this venture. They lost their life savings; they lost their businesses. They definitely lost their respect for the government based on how they were treated and how they're still being treated in the wake of this disaster.

Mr. Minister, what is your estimation of how many millions of dollars in economic spinoffs were really lost by the failure of SPUDCO?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the member would be just a little more positive. Investing in an industry, as many of the people in the gallery know today, like potatoes, is I think a very good idea.

As an example, diversification — Mr. Speaker, I just want to list for you some of the things that diversification have done. As an example, there's a growing hog industry in Saskatchewan, including both the location for new swine genetic production units.

We have an integrated beef lot, ethanol production unit. Mr. Speaker, there are now, because this government has promoted and pushed diversification, there are now 279 food processors in Saskatchewan in 1999 — an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 95 per cent since 1991.

I would argue that we have a strong industry out in the area that the member's referring to and it only makes sense that our government should be involved in diversification.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the losses at SPUDCO and the economic hardship it caused to many Saskatchewan businesses has nothing to do with depressed potato prices. It has everything to do with SaskWater and the NDP government sticking their nose in private business. They signed contracts with businesses who expanded or made investments based on their commitments to SPUDCO, only to turn around and then cancel them.

This government refuses to accept their responsibility to taxpayers and to businesses who are negatively affected by this failure.

Mr. Minister, you can't hide from the auditor's allegations. Will you admit that SaskWater and SPUDCO were wrong in their handling in the investment of the potato industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — To the member, if he's, Mr. Speaker, if he's asking me to say that, he's also asking me to say that the Royal Bank, who has lots of expertise, and the Farm Credit Corporation, who has lots of expertise, also made mistakes. They, like us, and in partnership with us and in partnership with . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is asking me to say that, he's also saying, Mr. Speaker, that the Royal Bank and the Farm Credit Corporation, who have much expertise in this, who worked with ourselves and who worked with many of the irrigators who are here today, also that they made mistakes.

And I think we are all prepared to admit that we did make mistakes. But we made substantial improvements, and we've learned a lot and there's a strong and growing industry out in that area today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Audit of Uranium City Hospital

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of Health. Yesterday in his spring report, the Acting Provincial Auditor revealed very serious problems within his audit of the board of governors of the Uranium City Hospital. This board was established by order in council in 1995.

In his report, the auditor indicates the board had no conflict of interest guidelines, no strategic plan, no code of conduct, no operating budget approval process, no written rules and procedures for financial reporting of inventory and asset control, and questionable actions in all of these areas. In short, your appointed board is running out of control and has no accountability to the taxpayers.

Madam Minister, in light of the scathing report by the Provincial Auditor, what are you going to do to correct this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The board of governors at Uranium City Hospital and the department have responded to the serious allegations of misconduct that were put forward, and a file has been sent to the provincial Justice department for a public prosecution. They have done an operational audit in Uranium City and also a forensic audit, and that is in the Justice system right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

again to the associate minister. Mr. Speaker, we understand that there was a report submitted to the Department of Health in June 1998 which was done by SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurse) and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) concerning problems they were raising about this hospital.

We also understand that when the Associate Minister of Health was the president of SUN, she herself was in Uranium City looking into the problems expressed by her members. Yet the auditor says it wasn't until December 1998 that the board of Uranium City Hospital contacted the department with their concerns. So obviously there was a problem that a lot of people knew about, perhaps even a year before anything was done by the Department of Health.

Madam Minister, when did you first learn that there may be problems of this board and its staff? What specifically were you told, and will you release all of the reports that were submitted to the department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health was aware June '98 that there was some mismanagement there at the management level, so an operational audit was done. From that operational audit, then we looked at some of the recommendations and a forensic audit was initiated.

I was elected to this legislature in June of '98. When I was SUN president and up in Uranium City, there was problems with the staff and the CEO (chief executive officer) and the director of nursing. Those were the situations I was looking into at that time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister. Mr. Speaker, the auditor raises serious questions about the practices and conduct of the board of the Uranium City hospital.

He points to payments made to board members for personal use. He says the overall financial planning and reporting needs drastic improvement. He says the board delegated the CEO of the hospital to manage and control operations. He says during the specific time period, the board did not approve a strategic plan of any operating budget.

Madam Minister, you approve the operating budgets of health boards. Did you receive one from the Uranium City Hospital Health Board? Did you approve this budget? Were you responsible for it or were they?

Madam Minister, how could you approve budgets when you knew there was an investigation as to the procedures going on? Where was your responsibility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, the board of governors and the department are working together on this issue. The operational audit was done, then the forensic

audit was done. That audit was given to the Provincial Auditor and now it is in the hands of the Justice department. Further information or further action will be taken on advice from them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, isn't this a wonderful situation? Here we have a board that was appointed by your government, that is now under investigation by the Justice department. You have a scathing Provincial Auditor's report which refers to misuse of health care dollars and negligent financial management.

You've taken the control away from other boards and yet for two years you've done nothing but approve these budgets year after year. Obviously there's not only neglect going on at the Uranium City hospital level; there's negligence going on in your department, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, when will you take responsibility for this? When will you see to it that there's a complete audit and review of this entire health system? What other things are you keeping under wraps?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Auditor identified some problems with the operations of the board that we are following through on. We're currently reviewing the control processes, the orientation of the board, how the board deals with its financial situation. We are working on that with this board.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, once more the minister keeps ducking responsibility in this whole matter.

Madam Minister, why is it so that your government only comes clean with these issues when the Provincial Auditor brings it to the light of day? Madam Minister, what else is going on behind closed doors? Will you release the reports that were given to your department so the people of this Assembly can understand what's going on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll say again that in June of '98, when we found out about the problems in Uranium City, an operational audit was immediately initiated, which we participated in, and assisted the board of governors.

From that operational report there were some issues that we thought needed to be followed through with a forensic audit. We then initiated that and have given the results of the forensic audit to the Provincial Auditor. So nothing has ever been hidden.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Review of Personal Injury Protection Plan

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question for

that minister of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in a rare fit of unsolicited honesty that minister revealed that no one wants to chair his botched up no-fault review committee, Mr. Speaker. Not even Fred Zinkhan.

Mr. Speaker, let's think about that for a minute. This is Fred Zinkhan of Olive Waller Zinkhan and Waller, the biggest NDP law firm there is. Mr. Speaker, that's the firm. No one ever leaves the firm. Yet here we have Fred Zinkhan, one of the biggest NDP lawyers in town, and he doesn't even want to touch the mess with a 10-foot pole.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, how much more evidence do you need? When will you admit that your no-fault review is a complete failure?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a mandate in the legislation to review this personal injury protection plan and to deal with it in a way that allows us to improve it and make it even better than it is now. We're going to continue with that. There are many people who are very keen on volunteering and being part of this kind of review because it involves a review of public policy.

What I really reject and what I object to from that member and other members opposite is that they will personally attack those kinds of people who come forward to offer their services. That is not good for public policy in this province and I would ask this member to apologize for many of his remarks that he's made about some very prominent individuals of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member across said mandate — that he had to fix something. I think he should have said that he's got a band-aid to fix something. He's concerned about the people of good repute in this particular province not wanting to work on his committee. Well, Mr. Speaker, no one in this province wants to work on his committee.

Mr. Speaker, these are also not happy times at Tommy Douglas House. Support for the NDP is disappearing ever day, and now even people like Fred Zinkhan are getting ready to bail out. Why didn't Fred Zinkhan want to head up the no-fault review? Because, he said, one of the factors now driving the lawyers' opposition is a desire to replace the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — He said, and I quote: "Their thinking may be the most . . ."

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order! Hon. member for Rosthern kindly go directly to your question.

(1430)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue

with that quotation.

Their thinking may be that the most effective way to replace no-fault, (Mr. Speaker), is to replace the government.

That from a long time NDP supporter . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask the hon. member to kindly go directly to his question.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that no one seems to like your review, Mr. Minister, will you scrap it and start over with a truly independent review committee?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, once again, rather than apologize that member repeats his offensive statement about these individuals who have volunteered their time to work and improve our system in Saskatchewan.

What I would say to the member opposite is that we will fulfill the mandate as set out in the legislation to do a proper review of this personal injury protection plan because that's what's needed for the people in Saskatchewan. And if the lawyers want to participate, we're happy to have them there. If they don't want to participate, they can go and talk where they want. We're going to do this review and we're going to do it in a way that improves the system for all the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will tell that minister what's offensive around here. It's offensive that this government has spent \$87,000 on a committee that hasn't even met. I'll also tell you what's offensive in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — And that's setting up a committee to review PIPP (personal injury protection plan) and not put a single person from the victims of no-fault on that particular committee. That's offensive, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's time that that minister stand up in his place, get rid of the committee as it is — as they're leaving one by one on their own — replace it with a committee that has confidence from everyone in this province. When will you do that Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that that member opposite uses the figure of \$87,000. I would like all people in Saskatchewan to know that we spend \$87,000 every hour, everyday on interest on the debt that was rung up by those people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We in this province are trying to deal with all of that which we inherited from the people opposite. And we are going to continue to improve those things as we have

brought forward in this province.

One of the things that we did do was bring forward a personal injury protection plan that had a built-in review. That review is going to take place, we're going to work with people from within Saskatchewan who are capable and who know what they are doing in assessing what they're doing. We will continue to do that whether or not the lawyers are there.

My final point is, has that member met with the committee yet himself because they have been working since January. I doubt that he's had anything to do with them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of a very open and accountable government, Mr. Speaker, and by leave of the Assembly, I would respond to questions 149, 150, and 151.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Written answers are given to questions 149, 150, 151, and those answers are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000.

For the past two years the Department of Health and the ministers of Health have been consulting with the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses to develop this new Act. The current Act has become outdated and does not contain the necessary and standard provisions required in newer professional legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to say that this new Act contains some very positive changes for both the profession and the people it serves. In previous years we've made similar changes to update the legislation governing other health professionals in our province. Mr. Speaker, the new Act more closely links the care licensed practical nurses provide to their education and training.

LPNs (licensed practical nurse) will continue to work alongside RNs (registered nurse) and RPNs (registered practical nurse) and other health providers to perform valuable public services within their respective competencies.

This new Act does not change what licensed practical nurses can do in our province. It does allow these valuable health practitioners to more independently provide the full range of care and service that they've been trained to provide.

Mr. Speaker, we've also retained scope of practice reference in

the new Act. These will help nurses and employers alike as they plan and manage staffing issues. This legislation will also ensure that licensed practice nurses are accountable to the very people they serve.

The new Act contains a number of updated public accountability measures that are standard in today's professional legislation. For example, the number of public representatives on the college's council will be expanded, and the members of the public will be included on the disciplinary committee.

The legislation sets out a clear and more effective process for responding to and resolving public concerns about licensed practical nurses. Disciplinary hearings will be open to the public and the entire discipline process will be transparent.

This Act will also require the association to file an annual report with my office. As well, bylaws that may impact the public will require government approval. The approval process will allow for consultation with key stakeholders such as therapists, educators, physicians, and health districts.

Finally, the new Act will ensure flexibility in setting registration requirements and issuing licences to facilitate the recognition of licensed practical nurses from other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, these are positive changes for Saskatchewan's health system. These changes have been developed in close consultation with the profession and other stakeholders in the province. I believe that this new Act will serve licensed practical nurses, their clients, the citizens, and the people of this province well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that this Bill is extremely important to the future of health care in this province, and therefore crucial to all of us. It is imperative to the future of our health care system that LPNs and RNs are fully employed in our health care system in such a manner as to make full use of their considerable skills, knowledge, and abilities.

I understand that it is the intent of this Bill to do that and I applaud that goal. LPNs and RNs are among the most dedicated, hard-working professionals in this province, and we should all thank them for their great efforts on our behalf.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — We are looking forward to meeting with their executive in the near future, Mr. Speaker, to discuss this matter more fully, and accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move that the matter be adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 25 — The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to move second reading of amendments to The Irrigation Act, 1996.

When The Irrigation Act was passed in 1996 it replaced The Water Users Act, The South Saskatchewan River Irrigation District Act, and The Irrigation Districts Act.

This consolidation was intended to provide uniform legislation for all the irrigators in the province by simplifying the administration of irrigation and following the establishment of research projects funded, directed, and controlled by irrigators.

It also instituted a user-pay model of irrigation development. This takes the burden of funding for operation and maintenance of irrigation projects off the shoulders of government, setting up a sinking fund to cover the infrastructure replacement.

The Irrigation Act, 1996 achieved many of its original objectives. However, experience gained during the implementation process determined a need for changes and clarification.

All 28 active irrigation districts and 2,400 individual irrigators were invited to participate in consultation meetings to review these changes. At these meetings, Sask Water together with the irrigators, discussed these issues and possible solutions, and that is the reason that I'm speaking about this today, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments of The Irrigation Act are necessary to simplify the administrative process for both the irrigation districts and for Sask Water. Changes are also being made to address potential liability concerns associated with existing and future irrigation developments.

The first amendment related to liability ensures that when Sask Water grants an approval for use of water for irrigation, it will not be held liable as long as Sask Water acted in a responsible manner with the best available information.

For example, if Sask Water issued an irrigation certificate to allow an irrigation project to operate, and then at a later date it is discovered there has been salinity damage to the land, when Sask Water doesn't want . . . what Sask Water doesn't want, I should say, is for the irrigator to be able to make a claim against the corporation saying there's damage to my land; it's your responsibility. Because when Sask Water approved the project, it acted in good faith, Mr. Speaker, using the best practices of the day, as I said.

With respect to the cancellation amendment, as an example, if Sask Water issued an irrigation certificate to an individual and then down the line it's proven to have a negative effect on the neighbouring property, other amendments will allow Sask Water to cancel the certificate.

As well some of the province's irrigated land developed prior to the coming into force of The Irrigation Act, 1996, does not meet today's soil/water compatibility standards for continued operation. Under the grandfathering amendment, instead of forcing abandonment of these projects, Sask Water will allow

the operator to decide if the project is still feasible.

In turn, the irrigator accepts responsibility for any damage which may arise from the previous or future operation of the project.

Why is this necessary? Well, Mr. Speaker, the alternative to this approach is to soil test all existing projects at significant cost and time, and force abandonment of projects which don't meet standards, even though the project may still well be economically viable for that irrigator.

The Irrigation Act, 1996 also required non-district irrigators who wished to continue irrigating, to sign an irrigation service agreement prior to December 31, 2001. The administrative costs of obtaining these agreements within that time frame were prohibitive. With the passing of these amendments, all those who were irrigating as of January 1, 1997 may continue to do so. The irrigation service agreement will be obtained for these projects over a longer time period at a considerable cost saving, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments also clarify the conditions under which provincial irrigation districts will assume responsibility for irrigation works owned by the province. The Act requires a water supply contract that lays out the details of operation, maintenance, and replacement of the works. And it also clarifies that the quality of water delivered to the project is the responsibility of the irrigation district.

(1445)

Essentially this provision says the people of Saskatchewan initially paid for the infrastructure and now it should be the responsibility of the districts to pay the full costs of operation, maintenance, and replacement. Another reason for the amendments, Mr. Speaker, to the Act, came at the request of the Irrigation Crop Diversification Corporation (ICDC).

And for those of you who may be unfamiliar with this group, ICDC is a producer organization responsible for irrigation research, demonstration, and education in Saskatchewan. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, ICDC understands irrigation research, and demonstration benefits all the irrigators, and it is therefore unfair to only collect levies from district irrigators, as has been done in the past two years. ICDC wants the authority to assess all intensive irrigators for irrigation research and demonstration.

In recognizing the need for these changes, Sask Water went to the people most affected to seek their input. As I mentioned earlier, all active irrigation districts and 2,400 individual irrigators were invited to participate in the consultation meetings held in Moose Jaw, Outlook, and Swift Current, to review the proposed changes and solicit feedback.

ICDC and SIPA (Saskatchewan Irrigation Projects Association) also participated. Mr. Speaker, most irrigators who participated in the consultations agree with these changes . . . agree that these changes are needed to allow them to meet the economic challenges of the future.

In closing I'd like to remind you that irrigation is a key factor in the economic growth of rural Saskatchewan. Currently

approximately 300,000 acres of land are under irrigation in Saskatchewan. Provincially there is the potential for an additional, believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, 1 million acres. Around Lake Diefenbaker there is certainly potential for an additional up to 150,000 acres of irrigation.

These amendments will ensure expansion of the irrigation industry is viable, sustainable, and beneficial to the provincial economy.

How is irrigation beneficial? Irrigation adds jobs, increases output, and increases diversification in the rural economy. In fact irrigation gross returns are four times that of dryland crops, and that means irrigation has the potential to generate far more rural jobs and businesses than a less intensive dryland agriculture.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2000.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in making a few comments regarding the current Bill, Bill No. 25, certainly as the minister indicated in his wrap-up, the irrigation sector of our province is certainly an important area in the agricultural field.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are many producers across this province who would just give their eye tooth at times to be in an area where they would have access to irrigational opportunities, especially when we look at the difficulties that arise from dryland farming. And this spring is just another indication that there are areas in this province that are really struggling where irrigation would really be a benefit.

Mr. Speaker, as well though, we understand why the government and then the department have been taking a close look at the old Act and have been updating the Act, because of the areas where the Act certainly has lagged behind the progress in the area of irrigation. I would have to suggest that the expansion of irrigation land in this province is something that's really been a benefit to the province.

It certainly, to the producers who have the advantage of taking advantage of the opportunity to irrigate, it's created a real economic opportunity for them.

I might add as well, though, that anyone who gets involved in agriculture and expands and certainly moves into the irrigation sector, there's also costs involved. So we want to make sure that the regulations that people are dealing with are such that they can work with, and the regulations and legislation is compatible so after they've invested substantial sums of money and time, they don't find themselves in an awkward position because maybe the Act is out of date.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly important that we take a careful look at legislation, that we look at the changes, that we talk to the industry and to individuals that are involved and make sure that we're not putting impediments in place that would really impede the progress and involvement. But as well, that we're also protecting the environment and the stakeholders as well in regards to pieces of legislation such as the one we have before us today.

However, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest we need to review, as an opposition, review this legislation very carefully before we just say we're going to move it forward to indeed see to it that all of the concerns have been addressed. And my colleagues will certainly — and I — will be taking the time as well just to do some more in-depth research and following up with the stakeholders to see to it that the legislation, as been mentioned by the minister, certainly meets the requirements of the industry as we see it today.

Therefore having said that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of An Act to amend The Crown Corporations Act, 1993. There have been no substantial revisions to The Crown Corporations Act, 1993 since it was created in 1993. Mr. Speaker, this Bill will make several amendments to allow Crown Investments Corporation and its subsidiary Crowns to operate more effectively and efficiently.

The first amendment will remove the mandatory requirement that the minister responsible for a CIC Crown corporation serve as a member of that board. In the spring 1998 legislative session, we amended the Act to remove the requirement that the minister responsible serve as chairperson on the boards of the major Crown corporations. We are now extending this to the boards of Saskatchewan Transportation Company, Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund Management Corporation, and our newest Crown corporation, Saskatchewan Land Information Services Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is the direct result of the Crown review conducted in 1996 and 1997. During the talking about Saskatchewan Crowns public hearings in 1996, people raised concerns about political interference in our subsidiary Crown corporations. They had the perception that our Crowns were acting like arms of government rather than like businesses.

They said that one way to change that perception would be to remove the requirement that cabinet ministers chair individual Crown boards. They said that it would be more appropriate to designate a Chair from among the private industry members of each board.

Mr. Speaker, this government agrees. We have seven cabinet ministers on the CIC board of directors of which I am the Chair. This board, as the holding company board, oversees decisions of individual Crown boards. As well, there is accountability of the Crown corporations to the Crown Corporations Committee of the legislature.

With these checks and balances in place, the requirement for the cabinet ministers responsible for each Crown to chair their board of directors is no longer there. That role can be better fulfilled by any of the highly qualified business people who have agreed to serve on these boards. However, the amendment does not prohibit the appointment of cabinet ministers as

members of those boards if desired.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment follows through on a commitment made by this government. The change has been working well in the Crowns in which it was implemented two years ago. We are pleased to extend it to the three Crowns that I have just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, the second amendment that I would like to speak about continues the theme of balancing the need of our Crown corporations to have greater autonomy with the need for them to be accountable to the public. Broadening the definition of the type of business with which the Crowns can invest will allow our Crowns to enter into relations with not only bodies corporate but also with such entities as limited partnerships. It is just common sense to make this change.

We are introducing an amendment to change the tabling requirements for contracts with commercially sensitive information. This will provide the minister with discretion as to what will or will not be tabled.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is designed to protect our Crowns and our investment partners from having their commercially sensitive information made public. There will still be several opportunities for public scrutiny of the actions of CIC and its subsidiary Crowns through the publication of the order in council, through reporting of significant transactions with the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, and through tabling of annual reports and financial statements of the Crowns.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, some amendments would put into legislation what we have already put into practice.

In the past two years, we have taken several measures to improve the governance of our Crown corporations. We have introduced the balanced scorecard for CIC and its subsidiary Crowns as a performance management tool. This is a system of objectives, targets, and performance measures set by the CIC board of directors. It is designed to identify and to balance competing interests from the perspectives of public policy, financial performance, innovation and learning, and customer satisfaction.

I'm pleased to say that The Conference Board of Canada has concluded that the governance practices of CIC Crown boards are among the best in Canada. In fact, they have scored in the top 25 per cent of Canada's public and private sector boards.

The amendments that we are introducing will continue to strengthen governance within our Crown corporations. They will require that CIC review and approve the Crowns' capital and operating budgets, their goals and objectives, and their administrative policy and management practices, systems, and plans; and that CIC review and approve the results of the Crowns' operations.

Mr. Speaker, these measures are already in practice. The amendments will simply put them into legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 65, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a few comments on this piece of legislation before we move an adjournment to review the legislation.

As the minister indicated, there are a number of substantive changes in the Act. The minister was referring to the fact that the Act certainly hasn't been changed substantially over the past number of years, and as a result, there will be a number of changes that are coming forward in the Act. And it would certainly be appropriate for the opposition to review this Act a little more in depth before it certainly moves ahead.

I must compliment the minister though as well for the fact that the government is recognizing again that private individuals have the capabilities and the ability. And we have certainly qualified people who have . . . if given the opportunity to, can be excellent chairpersons on Crown Corporations Committee. So we see that as a positive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think on review we'll need to take a careful look as to exactly all the areas that the government is looking at in regards to this piece of legislation and why the changes are necessary. No doubt over a period of years there will be changes that take place that would call for changes in legislation, to update legislation. And I understand that's exactly what . . . or a fair bit of the current Act before us is doing, is actually updating a lot of the Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well I think it's important for us to realize that the Crowns in this province certainly have played a role. But I believe as the minister had indicated the public is also recognizing the fact that there's a dependent and almost a business-like role that the Crowns have to play as well, whether or not they continue to exist as they currently exist or if there are changes to make them more accountable.

I think those are areas that need to be certainly looked at, reviewed. And the public has certainly indicated to the government, as they have indicated to us, that there are areas that they would like to see the Crowns being acting more responsibly in their role that they play in delivery of services in the province of Saskatchewan.

Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe though it would be appropriate to give a more in-depth review of this Bill before us, and therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2000.

The purpose of this Act, Mr. Speaker, is to repeal 11 obsolete statutes. And you'll be glad to know I'm going to briefly describe each of them. The Act also makes consequential amendments to other statutes to remove references to these statutes. The 11 statutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are being

repealed because they are no longer used.

Mr. Speaker, the first Act is The Grain and Fodder Conservation Act. This Act was passed in 1946 to provide powers for the Minister of Agriculture to lease, purchase or build accommodation for the storage of grain for use in emergency as seed or feed at times when crop production was abnormally low. Mr. Speaker, this Act has not been used in the last 10 years.

(1500)

The Minister of Agriculture and Food has the power to respond to grain and feed shortages under other legislation. Therefore, The Grain and Fodder Conservation Act is redundant and can be repealed.

The second Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Horticultural Societies Act. Horticultural societies may now be incorporated under The Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995. As the Minister of Agriculture and Food is no longer involved in the operation of these societies, the Act is no longer required.

Under the transitional provisions in this Act, societies will have a two-year period in which to register as a non-profit corporation, and the cost of registration will be paid by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

The third Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Industrial Development Act. The Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation or SEDCO was created by this Act in 1966. SEDCO was dissolved in 1995, therefore this statute is redundant.

Mr. Speaker, The Oil Well Income Tax Act was passed in 1978. This is the fourth of the Acts under this particular Bill to be repealed, Mr. Speaker. The oil well income tax system was a direct tax on income derived from the production of oil in Saskatchewan. In 1983 this system was replaced by a simpler production tax system under The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act. The Act has not applied to oil well incomes since 1982, therefore the Act can be repealed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, number five, The Pioneer Trust Company Depositors Assistance Act. Pioneer Trust Company went into liquidation in 1985. This Act was passed in 1986 to provide payments to depositors who were not covered by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation. Mr. Speaker, as all depositors' claims have been satisfied, the Act is no longer required.

The sixth Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Pyramid Franchises Act. This Act is being repealed in light of amendments to the Competition Act — federal legislation — which prohibits pyramid franchises and regulates multi-level marketing firms. Prior to these federal amendments, the Competition Act exempted multi-level marketing firms that were provincially regulated. As a result of the federal amendments, licences under The Pyramid Franchises Act terminated on January 1, 1993.

Multi-level marketing companies previously licensed under The Pyramid Franchises Act are now licensed provincially under The Direct Sellers Act. Therefore consumers will continue to be protected.

The seventh Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Road Allowances Crown Oil Act. This Act was passed in 1959 to authorize the collection of a 1 per cent levy on the production of oil from under Crown road allowances. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the road allowance levy was eliminated in 1983 and the Crown royalty and freehold production tax systems were adjusted to capture the foregone revenues. Therefore this Act can now be repealed.

The eighth Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Seed Grain Advances Act. This Act was passed in 1908. It gave a special lien and priority to mortgages that provided loans to mortgagors for the purpose of purchasing seed. The amount borrowed was added to the mortgage at the interest rate of the mortgage. Today, Mr. Speaker, with numerous other financial options available, this Act is no longer used.

The ninth Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is The Small Business Investment Incentives Act. The small business investment incentives program provided grants to investors who invested in a registered small business incentive corporation. This program was discontinued in 1990 and all of the projects have been wound down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, number 10, The Stock Savings Tax Credit Act. The stock savings credit . . . tax credit was implemented in 1986. It provided income tax credits to investors who made equity investments in the shares of eligible public companies. The program was terminated in 1990 and therefore the Act is no longer required.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, The Venture Capital Tax Credit Act. This — the venture capital program — allowed investors to receive provincial tax credits if they invested in a registered venture capital corporation. The program was discontinued in 1990 and therefore the Act is no longer required.

Mr. Speaker, those are the eleven Acts which are being repealed by this Act. I move second reading of An Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete Statutes and to enact transitional provisions and consequential amendments with respect to certain Statutes being repealed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was . . . first glance at this piece of legislation and the first comments that the minister made, I was thinking that maybe this is a piece of legislation that could just go through into committee. But having listened a little more carefully, I think it's certainly a statutory Act that needs to be looked at a little more carefully, especially with the number of changes and regulatory reform changes that the Act is going to be making.

The minister talked about the fact that some of the pieces of legislation were going to be redundant and no longer necessary, such as the Pioneer Trust Act. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had it not been for that Act, there's many public employees, teachers especially, who would have been out substantial, if not all of their pension fund. And it's unfortunate that that had to be dealt with at that time.

But certainly we . . . while we would like to believe that everything has been addressed, the auditor certainly pointed out

yesterday that we are still looking at a major shortfall in regards to the unfunded pension liability that needs to be addressed in the future. But that's just one of the number of Acts that the minister talked about in this piece of legislation that are going to be dealt with.

He talked about some of the reforms that will be brought forward in a number of Acts for the protection of consumers. And certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we think that is very appropriate.

And it certainly is important in today's society especially with the technological changes that we have seen, access to the Internet, and a certain number of different areas that people can find themselves in grave difficulty. And I think it's going to be incumbent upon us to look very carefully at bringing in legislation that controls the airways and makes, if you will, vendors more responsible for their actions and the services they provide.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just on the news at noon there was another situation in regards to use of cameras and the Internet that we begin to look at. And it's amazing to see as a result of technology, as a result of computers, as a result of the Internet what people can do and what they can get away with unless we put in place strict guidelines.

So it would seem to me that with the number of changes that are actually being brought forward through this piece of legislation, Bill No. 62, it would be important for my colleagues and I to review this legislation a little more carefully and not just take it for granted. And therefore, at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 17

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 17 — The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. It is indeed an honour to stand here today to speak to Bill No. 17, The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000.

Most members know that at this time I don't have young children to worry about, but for many years I did have. In fact most members on this House have either older children or young children at this time that are the important part of their lives.

I think when I was in need of babysitter or someone to look after my children, I was on the farm and at that time I was fortunate enough not to have to be one of the people that were out working off the farm. So I didn't have the opportunity or the need to use child care in the official sense of the term. At that time, and that was probably three decades ago, we had neighbours who were our child care providers. When we needed

someone to look after our children for a few hours or a few moments, we just had to run them over to the neighbour's place because there was someone on the farm to look after the children. And we took them for granted.

And we did the same thing in return. If somebody needed their children looking after, we were there to do it for them. So rural areas have that benefit. We know the people down the road, at that time and even now, and so we have the fortunate exercise in our lives of knowing the people down the road.

At that time, when I was on the farm, we helped on the farm, and maybe it was being in the hog barn and if I needed somebody in a hurry, I knew that my neighbour was over there.

But, Mr. Speaker, things have changed a lot. The children, my children, now have to worry about daycares. They are the keeper of my grandchildren and I know that there's very many difficult challenges they face as young parents nowadays. The economic reality in Saskatchewan today is that both parents have to go to work.

And so there's many hours spent labouring over the decision of who's going to look after the children. Who can they place their children, their care of, knowing that when they go home at night, their children are going to be happy, well looked after, and they're provided for with the love and care that they would, if they had the opportunity to stay home. I think that is probably the biggest decision that young parents have to make nowadays.

And I don't think there's anything that a young parent likes to hear more than when they go to pick up their child from the babysitter to hear the child say, just let me stay for a few more minutes or when do I get to come back again. I think, for as much as parents sometimes feel a little bit put out wondering why they aren't glad to go home, it's still a good feeling knowing that their children are happy.

Looking after the child is not just looking after their physical needs, but we also know the young parents want the children to be challenged and they want to be . . . their concerns addressed when it comes to learning as well. And the child care providers that we have in this province, the ones that are trained for that job, undertake a lot of learning so that they can be sure that the children are learning in another environment other than just home.

In urban centres where parents actually have the opportunity to choose different sites, I know it's a concern, but in rural areas there often isn't even a choice. If you can find somebody to look after your child, you're fortunate. And I'm hoping that some of the changes that we are seeing in this amendment will address some of the concerns that young parents have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the Act in the current state says that children . . . a child care home must be operated out of the operator's principal residence only. The amendment changes this and now it'll permit individuals to provide family child care in settings other than their principal residence.

I think that this is really something that's very important to be happening because so often now the circumstances change with seasonal work and with rural work; with people in their

different lifestyles, we know that there isn't always something that's going to happen at a set time during the day. I think this is a very important change to the Act.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other aspect of this Bill is to allow the operation of group family child care homes for up to 12 children with two caregivers. All group family child care homes, unlike family child care homes, must be licensed. I know that there is also . . . depending on the age, there may be some flexibility. But this is something that I will be looking forward to discussing further with, not only my own daughters but with other young people.

I've had so many young people come up to me and say, that they dream of the day when they can stay at home and choose whether they actually — or both of them — want to go out and work, or whether they'll have the opportunity to build a career or whether they consider their career as family . . . building their family foundation at home.

Until the time comes when child care is actually a choice for young families in this province, I am pleased that this amendment is brought forward.

And it's not very often that we see a Bill brought forward in this House that actually mentions rural Saskatchewan and so many of the hardships that we find. And especially when it comes to raising a family in rural Saskatchewan.

So I do commend the minister for recognizing that this is a concern of young families — the few that we do have out in our area.

So with these few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to rise on this Bill and ask that the debate be adjourned so that we can continue to discuss it with other young families in this province.

Debate adjourned.

(1515)

Bill No. 15

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 15 — The Department of Justice Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on this Bill, Bill No. 15, an Act to amend the Department of Justice. There are a couple of issues that give us some concern that we would like to talk about.

One concern of the Act is the part of the Act under confidentiality when it talks about confidentiality for an individual who has been charged with an offence and it talks about when they are under the age of 18. I guess we have some concern that we're only addressing those that are under the age of 18 where there are many instances where adults also need to have access to information, and issues explained to them regarding the justice system.

And so this is one of the concerns, that a courtworker would be available to someone who is deemed not only under age but also an adult if they so require. So I think that this needs to be clarified. I don't think it's clear enough in the Act whether it is going to be accessible for everyone regardless of age or whether you must be under the age of 18.

The justice system must achieve equality and fairness and with some of the court cases that we have seen to date, today and in the past, this has not always been the case. Many lives are negatively affected when justice is not served properly and so we need to be very concerned about this.

The whole intent of the justice system should be and must be to achieve fairness and justice. Justice should not entrap because of a lack of knowledge of the system. It should provide fairness so that those that are truly guilty are convicted; but at the same time we must be mindful that those that are innocent must also be treated appropriately.

As an official opposition, we appreciate the fact that there needs to be some special needs and requirements regarding Aboriginal and Metis communities' specific cultural aspects. And it's good to see that the government has acknowledged this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we agree with this. However, at the same time assistance and help should be extended to all citizens of Saskatchewan who require further information and assistance when they are accessing the justice system.

Another concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there is no place in the changes that states, under confidentiality, that the information that the courtworker may be holding confidential in a solicitor-client type of privilege condition was acquired in the performance of their actual duty. Earlier it talks about performance of their duties, but in the confidentiality section it does not refer to, in the performance of their duties. Perhaps it has been referenced to in some other part of the Act or it has just been missed.

Our MLA from Cannington previously asked the minister to take a look at this and ensure that the information that these people are to keep confidential is actually acquired in the performance of their duties. And so we would hope, Mr. Deputy Minister, or Deputy Speaker, sorry, that this is being addressed and that we will have some clarification also on this issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the Bill proceeds onward, we believe that third party groups that are directly affected or would like to have input into this Bill must have a chance to come forward and to review the Bill and give opportunity for them to have their say.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 16

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 16 — The Justice Statutes (Consumer Protection) Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a few comments and to expand upon the debate on Bill No. 16, An Act to amend the miscellaneous consumer protection statutes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to look at the Bill, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, to look at the Bill somewhat, to some extent here, to try to get a better grasp of what it is the NDP government is trying to do here for — for or to as it may be — the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I notice that in many cases it seems to be in the Acts that are being talked about — The Direct Sellers Act, The Motor Dealers Act, The Sale of Training Courses Act, The Credit Reporting Agencies Act, and The Collection Agents Act — that there seems to be some clarification that is going to be taking place to help agents who may be involved in having to deal with bonds, and what have you, in this province. And that will certainly be of some value, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now what has happened in the past, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a lot of these responsibilities of course were the responsibility of the Lieutenant Governor. And of course that provided a great deal of extra red tape in the process by the time everything went through cabinet and got to the Lieutenant Governor, in helping people having to deal with bondsmen and what have you. So as it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what it is, is what the government seems to be trying to do here is to try to shorten the process. And for that we have some enthusiasm for this Bill.

Now by turning the responsibility over to a local registrar of the Court of Queen's Bench, well then of course what it does, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to speed up the process or the appearance that it would speed up the process.

But also what this Bill seems to speak or not to speak about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is some real good solid policy. In order to help the registrar out in helping to pay any monies that are recovered under a forfeited bond.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the problems that we have of course in this province, and we've seen it in many areas whether it's in the Department of Agriculture, or whether it's in SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), or it's in Education, there seems to be a real lack of direction from this government. And of course they don't have the policies in place that really help out their employees to make good sound decisions in regards to the people of Saskatchewan.

And we see that kind of loophole in this Bill again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Here an opportunity has been presented. They're trying to streamline the system a little bit, and for that we do want to applaud the government for making some sort of a stab at this. But unfortunately it only goes half way. In fact it probably doesn't even go half way it probably only goes a quarter of the way to where it has to get to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what we have here is someone, a registrar, who has been appointed into a position by the government to look after any

monies that are to be recovered under a forfeited bond while realizing the sale of any collateral security is going to be given a bit of *carte blanche* opportunity to be able to decide who should benefit from this monies that are recovered. So we don't know how this is going to help anyone out should they be in a position that they're receiving any of these monies.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way it works here is that under this Act is that — and this Bill that applies to several Acts in this province — is that what's going to happen here is someone is going to be given such an extreme an amount of responsibility and very indiscretionary responsibility that we feel very concerned that at some way along the process someone is going to get missed. Now when people are given the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to again participate in this debate. Obviously it must be raising a great deal of concern for the members opposite on the government side to have someone speaking to this Bill.

But to go back to where I was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here again we've got a Bill brought forward that is covering off several Acts in the province of Saskatchewan here in The Collection Agents Act, The Credit Reporting Agencies Act, The Motor Dealers Act, The Sale of Training Courses Act, and of course The Direct Sellers Act.

And again, Mr. Speaker, in order to remind everyone here that we need to be able to have a process that is transparent. We don't see that in here. It's got to be open and above-board.

There's a great deal of concern in this province, Mr. Speaker, that in many times in the past we've seen that this government on many, many occasions has taken upon themselves to be . . . to work behind closed doors, refine deals that are done in the dead of night, arrangements that are made with other political parties in order for them to retain power, and then come forward with Bills such as this that actually attack the human rights again in this province.

Here we have an opportunity for the government, through their own self-appointed agents, the opportunity to make indiscretionary decisions about how monies are to be distributed when they are recovered under a forfeited bond or realized from the sale of any collateral security.

So in the cases like this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to have this government, this NDP government, being able to take the bull by the horns so to speak, and be able to establish some sort of credible policy in this province. We've seen time and time again — whether it has to do with agriculture or whether it has to do with the management of our forests or the management of our non-renewable resources — there's a clear lack of direction.

And we see that again in this Bill, covering off these five Acts that I've mentioned previously, that the lack of direction in this Bill is going to provide for some very uneasy processes in this province where unfortunately it's going to leave people wide open for abuse. And we're very concerned about that.

Now unfortunately of course with this government always coming up with the idea that no one's at fault here — kind of a no-fault government — shouldn't we have a registrar then in this province who is collecting monies recovered from a forfeited bond or realized from the sale of any collateral security to be able to indiscretionate . . . through indiscretionate methods, being able to distribute these monies as they see fit rather than set down, through very clear policies, so that everyone who needs to benefit from these realized monies being able to share on an equal basis.

But does that say that in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No, no I'm afraid it does not. In fact this is a bit of a Bill that talks about "may" clauses here. A registrar "may" be able to distribute money as he deems appropriate to those persons who are to receive monies that are recovered under a forfeited bond or realized from the sale of any collateral security. This person would be allowed to distribute those monies to anyone that he feels comfortable with.

And actually nowhere in this Bill does it talk about that it's they "shall" distribute this money to those people who are deserving of it, but rather that this money may be just distributed to someone who says they may want to have some of those funds. And that's very unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This Bill should set out very, very clearly who is to receive those monies. It does not. It's just far too indiscretionary. This is a bit of a problem for those of us on this side who are trying to . . . (inaudible) . . . the concept of an open and transparent government; and that the people who work for this government and are trying to do their best for the peoples of Saskatchewan, that they too are open and transparent.

But do we see that in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No, we do not. In fact we see several . . . every section that is covered in here, through all five of them, whether it's The Sale of Training Courses Act or The Motor Dealers Act, or whether it's The Direct Sellers Act or even, Mr. Deputy Speaker, The Credit Reporting Agencies Act or The Collection Agents Act, that they're all saying exactly the same thing — that the local registrar "may" pay any money recovered.

Now this is a great deal of a concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How is it that a registrar will not receive the clear policies necessary for him, enable to . . . so that he may carry out his job in a type of manner that would be open and transparent so that the people of Saskatchewan will be able to feel very comfortable that this Act and this Bill and the Acts that it covers off will be handled in a professional and an appropriate manner?

(1530)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we want to take some time here before we move on with this Bill. We need to be able to have the time to debate it to the extent. And so that's why this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important that as we talk about this Bill and its effect upon these five Acts and how this government operates under and in a very clouded atmosphere, often behind closed doors and in the dead of night, making deals that no one ever gets to see. We're never really sure what they're going to do next.

And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're always aware that they're not sure what they're going to do next. And when we read a Bill such as this, Bill No. 16, we're very concerned that it certainly points out that they have actually no idea what they should be doing here.

Here's a government brings a Bill forward like this, is unable to set forth clear policy. All they want to do is be able to ram something through in hopes that the opposition party will, because of the mass amount of Bills that are being presented, that the opposition party will not have the time or be able to put the effort into examining these Bills.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to give the government of the day, this NDP government, a clear forewarning that yes, we are going to take the time to look at these Bills, have them debated thoroughly, and so that when we get to . . . the government wants to get to the point of trying to pass them that they've been well examined.

And maybe when we get to committee we'll be able to propose the appropriate amendments that will give this type of Bill the teeth that is necessary so that a register will be able to — when he recover monies under a forfeited bond or realize from the sale of any collateral security — be able to distribute those monies in a professional and transparent manner.

But rather instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we see in this Bill of course again is something that this government is again doing. It's going to be operating in the dead of night and behind closed doors. And we need to assure the people of Saskatchewan that the opposition party, the Saskatchewan Party in the province of Saskatchewan is going to be able to hold this government up to the light and hold them accountable for the Bills that they bring into this House.

Because we've seen many times in the past, whether it's in agriculture or whether it's in the non-renewable resource sector, that there's so many deals are made that we're unable to find out about it.

In fact it's been clearly indicated to us from the government, it's not their responsibility to report their actions; it's the responsibility of the opposition party in the province of Saskatchewan to be able to ask the right questions and then they'll report on what it is they're doing.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's one thing we'll never have to worry about once the opposition, the present opposition party becomes the government and the present government becomes what's left of an opposition party; that we'll have open and transparent government; that people will know what's going on.

The cabinet of the day will have the ability to be able to report to the legislature what is going on and that the people of Saskatchewan will have confidence that there will be no more deals made in the dead of night and behind closed doors.

And because of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel very strongly that more time needs to be spent on this Bill before we move it on to committee, and that I would ask that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 19

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 19 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to make some remarks to Bill No. 19, the Saskatchewan telecommunications Act, 2000.

It doesn't take very long and it's not very difficult to read this Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It only contains six short sections to it. One would think that this is an Act that we could move along quite readily; but if you look closely at the Act, it refers to of course an existing Act and there are quite a number of sections of the existing Act that are being repealed. And of course that has some major implications for telecommunications in our province and major implications with SaskTel.

So therefore I believe that this Act needs, you know, to be reviewed and studied and consulted with, with various sectors of the society and the economy for its ramifications and impact and so on. Because, as we all know, telecommunications has become and will continue to become very important to especially a province like Saskatchewan where we have a large area where we have people occupying. And quite often it's sparsely settled and there's fewer and fewer people out in some of the areas, but yet they depend very heavily on the telephone and Internet and those sorts of things.

I may not have as many white hairs as some of the members of this Assembly, but I can remember back to the days when . . .

An Hon. Member: — At least you have hair.

Mr. Hart: — As the hon. member from the opposite mentions, I do have some hair, and they are all laughing. But nonetheless I did lose some of . . . I used to have a lot more hair but dealing with some of the telephone service we had out in rural Saskatchewan in my early days of farming, it did cause me to lose some hair.

I go back to the days where we had the party lines. I can remember as a young person growing up in . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Whether we're follicley challenged . . . Members, order. Whether we're follicley challenged or not is somewhat irrelevant to the debate on the Bill before us. Order.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, I can remember the days growing up as a young child in rural Saskatchewan where we had the old party lines with the central operator in the local community in the old . . . you'd hear the long ring and then quite often, hopefully . . . We were always fearful when we heard the general ring or long ring or whatever you wanted to call it, that perhaps there was a fire at a neighbour's or whatever.

But quite often it was simply only an information call to let you know that there was an anniversary at a neighbour's or what have you.

But we've come a long way since those days, where we now have cellular service and Internet service available in all parts of the province. And it is very, very important that we do, since that is a very important component in enabling businesses and individuals to compete in the global economy that we must compete in today, and particularly so in rural Saskatchewan.

I think oftentimes our relatives and neighbours in urban Saskatchewan take good telephone service for granted because they've had good reliable service for quite a number of years. Whereas those of us in the other parts of the province, we know what conditions were like when we didn't have good telephone service.

I must say that telephone service has improved. We were very happy to see, upon implementation of . . . or changes in the environment that telephone companies have to operate nowadays with competition and so on, we were happy to see some fairly significant changes in the rates that we have to pay. And we certainly hope that that will continue.

And in fact I guess that's one of the greatest fears of those people who aren't in the major centres, that under revisions incorporated by this Act and under the new atmosphere in which telephone companies will operate, that there may be some significant cost increases in telephone services to those more remote areas. And by remote I mean those areas outside the major urban centres.

So I might just take a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to perhaps explain the importance of good telephone and Internet service to a small business, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, whether it be a farm or a small business, that is competing in the global economy.

Under today's conditions it's vitally important for managers to have access to up-to-date information, whether that be the current quotes on the Chicago commodity exchange or news releases by suppliers of inputs and that sort of thing. Availability of production information and all those sorts of things are available via the Internet, and also by making long-distance telephone calls but more so by the use of your home computer and the Internet. It's amazing the number of producers, farm producers and farm managers in particular, who have adopted this latest technology and rely on it on a daily basis.

In fact, I know several people who use the Internet several times a day, particularly in those periods of time where prices for products that we produce are moving either up or down on a daily basis because of weather or shortage of supply or what have you. And without proper information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can lose a lot of money or you can at least make enough to show somewhat of a profit. And quite often it's the marketing aspect which plays a large role in that area.

So these remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are intended to emphasize the importance that the whole province have affordable, reliable telephone service that is available to all people.

Some of the concerns with regards to telephone service and the implications of Bill 19 that have a direct impact on areas of my

constituency — if you will look at the brochure that SaskTel Mobility puts out as far as their coverage, you will see that there are sections within the Last Mountain-Touchwood constituency that have either no cellular service or very poor cellular service, areas such as the Bulyea to Govan area along Highway 20.

Through personal experience I know that the cellular service there is very poor, and it extends west of those communities to the resort areas along Last Mountain Lake. And I think we find that people utilizing those recreational areas along Last Mountain Lake, who are accustomed to having good cellular service, find it very unsatisfactory to utilize those areas.

And in fact, local business associations such as the Strasbourg business association are very concerned because of the fact that there's poor cellular service in their area, and they feel that it is directly impacting on the viability of their businesses. It is not enhancing their businesses. It's causing people not to use the recreation areas which are close to these communities, and who these businesses depend on for part of their clientele.

So I would urge SaskTel and this government to do as they say of in their recent news release — to improve service throughout the province, to use the latest technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to provide such services.

Another area within my constituency that also is . . . has a large white spot — the areas that the SaskTel Mobility map shows it has coverage is coloured in yellow — and there are some large white areas within the constituency. And that is the area of, along Highway No. 15, east of Raymore to Lestock, Kelliher, and that area. And I know again, through personal experience, that that's an area where there are pockets in there where there is virtually no cellular service. And in today's age where people depend on mobile service and telephone service, I think that's certainly an area that SaskTel needs to pull up its socks and have a look at.

So, with having expressed these concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would like to take some more time to consult with individuals, businesses, and various stakeholders in the economy. So I would move adjournment of debate on this Bill.

Debate adjourned.

(1545)

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 20 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I've had an opportunity to review the amendments proposed in Bill No. 20, The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Act, 2000.

And some of the comments from my colleague, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood certainly applies to these amendments, and I have a couple of other concerns that I would like to highlight.

But when I read through this Bill a couple of things came forward that I thought was very encouraging. I noticed that on June 30, 2000, SaskTel will be like any other telecommunications company in Canada and will be directly under the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) regulations. And I think that's something that will likely bring some changes, maybe some uncertainties, but certainly some changes and probably will encourage the competition in that particular industry. And I think that it's important that we try to adapt as quickly as we can to these changing conditions.

I know that June 30 or July 1 is rather an important date because there is a lot of uncertainties on that particular day. One of them is, as we had learned from budget day, there will be an implementation of some of the services and expansion of the PST (provincial sales tax) on certain aspects on July 1.

And I wanted to thank the Hon. Minister of Finance for referring some of the . . . by responding to some of the concerns that I had with a particular issue regarding that uncertainty. But the point, Mr. Deputy Chair, is that as we're moving into that new era, past June 30, these kind of uncertainties are bound to occur and we need to address them in an upfront and in a professional manner and I appreciate what the hon. minister did recently in my query.

However, in this particular case I think it's even a greater uncertainty because we're going into an era now that we have started in, and that is in terms of wireless communication. Up to date we have been looking at . . . certainly we're knowledgeable about the telephone system as we know it today. That has evolved considerably from the time that I was young and growing up, from when telephones . . . then a signal was passed along fence wires from farm to farm, in the rural communities in particular.

It certainly has moved ahead and even when I was a younger person all we could do is look at some of the popular cartoons where people would project as far as they could think into the future and talk about Dick Tracy type of wrist radios which was a total imagination at that time. Well we've leaped past that already in my time and I can't imagine what my grandchildren are going to be confronted with in terms of technology when that happens.

Where we are right now though is we have to adapt to this new technology of wireless communication and it is becoming so critically important in our society. I think we've just opened up the door. There is going to be a huge revolution in communications generally. The technology of communications is changing so very rapidly, but also the business of information and information exchange is going to depend so very much on that particular technology.

So I'm glad to see that the amendments that are coming forward are in fact addressing that aspect of the industry and through SaskTel and their holding corporation. I think that that is very timely.

What we have to be sure of when we're moving into this direction is that we make sure that when we try to put something in place we can try and anticipate further down the

road than it's maybe impossible for some of us to be able to do. So when we look at the opportunities for new competition in this particular field, it almost . . . the boundaries are almost infinite in terms of what can be achieved.

What we've achieved so far in terms of becoming competitive in this province with our telephone service has been quite phenomenal. As you know the competition has allowed us to put together a system of telephone communication, both hard line and wireless, but particularly hard line.

In long-distance rates the competition allowed there has shown that it can be achieved. And it has shown that we can have long-distance rates that are so very competitive that other jurisdictions actually look to some of the packages that have been put together in Saskatchewan and are trying to emulate them.

So the aspect of competition under the CRTC I think is an important aspect. How it's going to apply to wireless and mobile communications is going to be, like I mentioned earlier, very important.

I know we'll be able to see lower rates. That seems to flow directly from an opening of the competition rules and under the general regulation of the CRTC. Lower rates is a very important aspect of the competitiveness that we're going to be witnessing. But we're also going to witness other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're going to see for sure a wider selection of products coming very, very quickly.

When you look at the ads that you're seeing in the papers now, some of the technology that is available and the selection of the different technology is so wide that it almost defies our comprehension to keep up to it. Fortunately the manufacturers are making them very friendly for people like myself to use. And we're finding that they are in fact achieving a sense of freedom, a sense of instantaneous information that all of us will need and will continue to need and probably be even more critical in the future.

Another aspect of the competitiveness will be the products and services that will be put together so that they will attract new customers and be competitive against other competition in the market.

I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the aspect of mergers that are certainly overcoming and overtaking a large part of our commercial world as we know it — not only in telecommunications but in other aspects as well, be it financial, in oil and natural gas mergers, all of those areas. They seem to be the way that commercial activities are being conducted.

What I'm afraid of is that the independent telephone companies such as we have here in Saskatchewan, not being much smaller in scale, are going to be certainly at a disadvantage to merge companies that have a much broader financial base than a commercial base, and also a technology base than we have here. That means that we are probably going to continue to be uncompetitive unless we also look at ways to improve, but also expand.

And I guess what I was somewhat disappointed in, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, when I looked at the amendments, was the fact that we need to have enabling legislation — which I didn't see in these amendments — but enabling legislation to facilitate the kind of mergers that will allow us to be competitive in this province to expand. And also enabling legislation that will allow us to facilitate the private investment in these kind of ventures in Saskatchewan and not focus specifically on government funding of these new ventures. I think that's very critical to be moving forward with those kind of permissive legislations.

I see that in these legislations there is any rate increases or the rates as to be charged will be in fact taken away from the cabinet decision and put in fact under the control of CRTC and a more competitive environment. And I think that's very positive. And the schedules I notice have to be published, they have to be put together the rates, the charges.

And I was pleased though in that noticing particularly that in a case where there is competition in this particular industry, the rates and charges do not necessarily have to be put in . . . don't have to be published because that would then be a competitive disadvantage. So there is a hint of anticipation of competition in this industry, and I think that's very important.

Another aspect that I could see here was that we can strike . . . actually strike private deals between the telephone company or the wireless communications company and private customers. And I think that that's also important. That's a very important aspect of competition where you don't have to have a standardized rate but you can in fact make a particular deal. That's the competitiveness and that's the advantages I think we're going to need as we move ahead and expand into this new world of wireless communications.

What I hoped to find out when we finally get into the estimates that pertain to this particular aspect, I hope that we'll be able to develop or solicit what the overall direction is. I hope that we'll be able to find that from some of the questions we'll be able to direct to the minister. I think we would like to find out how these particular amendments and changes are going to affect the customers that they have in this province, how it's going to affect the future plans.

Some of those things, Mr. Deputy Chair, are very important to these amendments and to the future of the competitiveness of this telecommunications and wireless industry.

So because we need to do a little bit more work in trying to prepare for the estimates and do a little bit more research, I would move, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we adjourn debate on this particular amendment Act.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 26

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 26 — The Tabling of Documents Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a pleasure to speak to this Bill as the Justice critic for the official

opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of my colleagues have spoke to this particular piece of legislation and they have outlined the highlights of it. And I think it's worth noting though, that we should probably just quickly run over those again.

Basically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you read the Bill, the amendments therein are simplifying how documents are tabled in this legislature. This Bill will allow for a document to be tabled to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly when the House is not in session in order for the document to be made public.

And I think members on both sides of the House would agree that this is a positive development. It provides some accountability and some public information for people, whether or not the House is in session or not.

Currently the agency that's filing those documents has 210 days to table the document, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And over the next four years they're going to phase in a period of four years, wherein that amount of time will be trimmed from 210 to 120 days.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the spirit of these amendments are, I think, are well placed. And members on this side of the House have spoke to that.

There are some issues though that we will be getting into in committee, I think. And that is . . . primary among them is the fact that information that is provided in documents that are tabled are not always adequate. For example, annual reports from the Crown Investments Corporation, they do not always include all of the activities that the Crown may be engaged in.

And I can think of a couple of examples now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can think of the example of Channel Lake. I don't recall that the annual reports tabled in this House by SaskEnergy clearly laid out for taxpayers the very, very serious situation revolving around the misuse of taxpayers' dollars as it relates to Channel Lake. And this Bill, of course, would not be able to address that.

(1600)

Similarly in this particular session not long ago, the official opposition raised a number of concerns about a \$114 million pipeline that was constructed by SaskEnergy for which there appears to be no use. The capacity of the pipeline is greatly underutilized and we have asked some very pointed questions about what taxpayers got for \$114 million at a time when energy rates, gas rates for Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan small-business men and women are on the rise. And unfortunately this Bill wouldn't be able to deal with that.

What we need to deal with those issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is more than a piece of legislation, than any particular piece of legislation. What we will need to deal with those issues is a government that is committed to being truly open and accountable; to letting the taxpayers know exactly what is happening with their dollars.

And we need a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that

approaches tax dollars with that attitude, that it is not the government's money, it is the people's money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is what has lacked over the last nine years, and that is what the official opposition will correct in a few short years when it becomes the government of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — In recent events also, Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor's report, his report from the interim Provincial Auditor was made public yesterday. And that report brought to light some very interesting information as well.

And in that report you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the interim Provincial Auditor . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I just wish to remind the member that the Bill before us is The Tabling of Documents Amendment Act, 2000 as opposed to the details of any documents that are tabled. Now to the extent that the hon. member would tie his remarks into the Bill before us, I know that all members would appreciate.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's important when we're debating about the tabling of public documents in this legislature and this Bill specifically, which does make some improvements to that process, I think it's also important for us to point out where further improvements can be made in terms of the dissemination of public information.

And as it relates to the document that was tabled yesterday by the Provincial Auditor, he has highlighted, I think, a number of areas where improvements can be made by this government in terms of being open and accountable.

In addition to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the legislation that's currently before us will probably be best dealt with at this point in committee, where we will want to get into the very specifics of the Bill and ask some very specific questions. There are some concerns that we have on this side of the House that can be best dealt with in Committee of the Whole.

And so with those very few brief remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move that we now move immediately to Bill No. 231, The Fire-fighter Protection from Liability Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Swift Current has moved a superseding motion which the Chair needs in writing before the Assembly can deal with it. We'll pause for a minute to allow the hon. member time to put that in writing.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Saltcoats:

That this Assembly do now move to debate of Bill No. 231, The Fire-fighters Protection from Liability Act.

The division bells rang from 4:07 p.m. until 4:17 p.m.

Motion negived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 19

Hermanson	Elhard	Julé
Krawetz	Draude	Boyd
Gantefoer	Toth	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	McMorris
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Stewart
Kwiatkowski		

Nays — 26

Romanow	Hagel	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Melenchuk	Cline
Atkinson	Goulet	Lautermilch
Lorje	Serby	Belanger
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Yates
Axworthy	Junor	Kasperski
Wartman	Addley	

The Deputy Speaker: — The motion is lost. Debate continues on Bill No. 26. The motion, members — order, order — the motion has been lost. Debate continues on Bill No. 26, The Tabling of Documents Amendment Act, 2000.

The question before . . . question being called, all those in favour of second reading of Bill No. 26, please . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, is it . . . I'm sorry.

Members let us start this vote over so that it's not as awkward, with apologies to members of the Assembly. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Justice

Vote 3

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

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Let me introduce the officials: John Whyte, deputy minister of Justice and the Deputy Attorney General on my right; Doug Moen, the executive director of public law and community justice on my left, quite appropriately, I'm sure. Colleen Matthews, the executive assistant to the deputy minister behind; and Elizabeth Smith, the director of administrative services. As well of course, Mr. Chair, we have other officials at the back who may assisting from time to time.

(Subvote JU01)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. Mr. Minister, through you, welcome to the officials from the Department of Justice that are with you today. If you don't mind, today I'd like to spend some time on the issue of child maintenance enforcement.

Since assuming these duties that I have as the Justice critic, if I had to identify an issue that seems to have generated the most inquiries and most concern from people across the province, I think it would have to be issues surrounding the whole child maintenance enforcement area of your department.

I know I don't need to tell you and I certainly don't need to tell officials in your department that this particular issue can be very divisive for those who are involved in a situation where there's been a marriage breakup and there are children involved. Emotions run deep and strong. And just before we get into this particular issue, I'm sure we'll have some disagreements, Mr. Minister.

But, Mr. Deputy Chair, I do want to recognize the fact that this area of the Department of Justice I believe, is very, very busy. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that this area of the department, I am convinced, is probably overworked. I am not sure that there are the resources committed by the government that perhaps could be committed, given the demand in this area, to properly deal with the issue of child maintenance enforcement.

And I'd like to start along those lines if I could, Mr. Minister. Specifically, I wonder if you could detail for me the size of this area of the Department of Justice, the number of people involved, and the number of dollars that are committed to it. And in so doing, Mr. Minister, could you please contrast, or compare and contrast that with last year or perhaps even the year before, the last maybe three years of this particular area of your department.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, let me just respond to the member's question about staffing and the department's investment in maintenance enforcement. And I'd like to share the member's view that this is a very hard-working department. We have Lionel McNabb, the director of the department, here with us today.

And it's a department which as you know is . . . can only be regarded as extremely successful in terms of the numbers of dollars that it has enabled . . . or that it has transferred from parents who are not custodial parents to those who are. The numbers as you know are extremely significant.

The full-time staff this year, 2000-2001, is 31.6 full-time equivalents which is up one from last year. And indeed there is . . . we are in the process of adding I think two extra people to that number. The numbers in the past beyond that I'll have to get for the member as soon as I can.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, Mr. Minister, could you please tell me whether or not the positions that you just mentioned, the additional position, or the two, I think you mentioned two then, what will be their role within that area of the department. Will they be handling . . . actually handling case work, or will they be administrative, or what will be their role?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. The member will know that there have been concerns about access to telephones in the maintenance enforcement office, problems with the line being busy and so on. In order to address that the two new positions will be allocated to the phone line, which should facilitate that process considerably and ease the burden on those who are affected.

(1630)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, or, Mr. Deputy Chair. In reviewing some past exchanges on this particular issue with various members of the Assembly I can reflect back specifically on an exchange that I read between your predecessor and I believe the member from Moosomin, where these same questions were being asked on behalf of . . . primarily on behalf of mothers because that's who seem to be the custodial parents here by a great proportion.

And there were questions being asked on behalf of mothers who are rightfully and truly frustrated with the inability for themselves and, frankly, for the department to try to get some maintenance support from their husbands. And I guess that's the bottom line in all of this. And I noted in that exchange that your predecessor highlighted a very recent development within this area of your department. Another tool, I guess, that the maintenance enforcement office has as it relates specifically to drivers' licences of parents who are not meeting their obligations.

My understanding of that is that it's sort of a last resort. And during the course of that exchange I recall your predecessor indicating that certainly while this is a step in the right direction, even enforcement of that particular measure, in other words the ability for the government, for that office to use that tool, is sometimes difficult for various reasons. Perhaps they can't locate the parent — whatever the reason is.

I wonder, could you give us an update on that particular measure that the department now has at its disposal? How often is it used? How often is it used successfully? And maybe also, if you could, some of the reasons why it may or it may not be working that well.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, the member is quite right that the withholding of drivers' licences has been an effective tool in ensuring that recalcitrant, non-custodial parents meet their financial obligations to their children.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairperson, that the — Mr. Deputy Chair — that the default rate on maintenance enforcement has reduced from about 85 per cent in '85-86 to 24 per cent this past year. I mean a considerable change and a considerable improvement to those people that we're both concerned about.

And I think it's fair to say that the driver's licence withholding program has been really very successful, in particular with regards to self-employed people. But it will always be problematic when dealing with someone who will ignore the fact that they need a licence to drive or will ignore the inconvenience of not having a licence. So there's obviously a limitation there with regards to how people will react.

But I might just give the member some numbers to give him the scope of licence withholding. Since November 1996, there have been 2,491 letters, warning letters, issued to non-custodial parents, 1,416 final notices, and altogether 1,053 drivers' licences have been suspended for those who are not paying their obligations.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, I want to come back to the issue of the withholding of driving privileges.

But you raised the question of default rates here in the province versus where they were 13 or 14 years ago. And I wonder if you outline quickly for the committee members an answer to that — to a question of just the casework that the department, that this area of the department currently faces. What kind of numbers are we talking about? Not percentages, but what kind of numbers are we talking about and how does that compare with previous years?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I can tell the member, if I can read this graph properly, that in 1999, this last year, there were almost 10,000 cases which were active and about 1,200 new cases. And that number has steadily increased over the last 10 years, and . . . actually I can probably make sure the member gets this graph and he can see.

But the numbers are significant, as I say — almost 10,000 active files. And I might also indicate that over the last two years, roughly the same amount of money has been collected by the office. And that is just about \$27 million.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair of committees, Mr. Minister, thank you for that information. And now if I can, I just want to return to the driver's licence question.

Could you please outline any measures that this particular branch of your department takes in the case of this particular step being taken on a parent who relies on his or her driver's licence in terms of making a living and being able to actually support the kids in the first place.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. As I indicated, the driver's licence withholding program has been particularly successful with self-employed people. And perhaps that's a large group about which the member is concerned. They who need their cars for work to earn their living are more likely to respond. In effect, that's the case.

What happens is first of all a letter is . . . a warning letter is sent asking the non-custodial parent who's not paying his or her obligations to come and discuss the payment schedule. After 15 days if they haven't done that, a final notice is sent out to remind them that they will lose their licence unless arrangements are made to pay the amount that is outstanding. And in the event that they don't respond to that, then their licences will be withheld. And as I mentioned, it's about 1,050 since 1996.

So the opportunity is made available to those who need their driver's licence in order to make their living, to come to make arrangements with the office to develop an approach to pay the backlog.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, I wonder if the minister could inform the committee members whether or not SGI has had any communication with your department, with the maintenance enforcement office, whether or not they have any concerns or suggestions regarding this particular tool that the office uses to try to provide maintenance enforcement?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, in response to that question, SGI and maintenance enforcement discuss these matters on a fairly regular basis. It plainly is a question of concern as to whether or not someone who has their licence withheld will simply ignore that and drive in any event.

But I might say that — and this is a matter for all of us in many respects — as SGI does respond . . . or as we do respond by withholding licences for now quite a wide range of traffic offences and so on if fines aren't paid.

But I might perhaps provide some comfort to the member on this point: if the arrears are made up, the licence can be returned in as short a time as two hours. So there's a very quick period of response from the office in the event that the person who's losing his licence or has had his licence suspended as a result of not paying and does, in fact, come forward and make arrangements.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, thank you for that answer. I guess I have now perhaps a little bit more general question in the whole area of child maintenance enforcement. I've also noted . . . I think I've . . . I don't want to attribute remarks to you that weren't made by you. But I believe you have said, and perhaps your predecessor has said, that one of the problems, one of the challenges that our province faces, and probably other provincial Justice departments face in this area, is interjurisdictional issues. And how you either locate, and then once you've located, how you force compliance with someone who's left the province and possibly even left the country.

And I wonder if you'd comment a little bit on that. And I also wonder if you would also comment on whether or not at Justice ministers' conferences in this country if this issue has been raised about interjurisdictional compliance and enforcement with respect to child maintenance.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thanks. This, as the member knows, is a difficult question, primarily because of our division of powers. If a person moves from our jurisdiction to Alberta, then it's not so easy to enforce the order, as the member knows. And indeed, some non-custodial persons make it quite difficult to track them down.

But the member's question specifically was is this something that ministers of Justice across the country are considering? And the answer to that is yes. There is a draft Act in process which it is anticipated — provided agreement can be obtained — would be then introduced into each provincial legislature. Basically the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders Act would be introduced into every province to provide for the enforcement of orders in other parts of the country.

So this is a matter which has received the attention of maintenance enforcement offices and officers across the

country and ministers of Justice too. It is not immediate but it is not very far away.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister, I guess I would ask a follow-up question in this area. What has been our position? What has been the province of Saskatchewan's position when this issue has come up at Justice ministers' meetings?

And I would hope, sir, that the position of the province of Saskatchewan has been a very aggressive one. Because it strikes me a little bit strange that we as a dominion can come up with interprovincial agreements and protocols with respect to trade, with respect to tendering of, you know, public tenders, but as it relates to children and as it relates to the proper support of those children in our province and across the country, I would hope that you can stand in the Assembly today, sir, and confirm that the position of the province of Saskatchewan has been to aggressively pursue some sort of protocol with your counterparts across the country.

I'd ask as a corollary question when the next Justice ministers' meeting is upcoming, and I'd ask for your commitment to ensure that that position is made at that meeting.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well you have that, Mr. Member. That's about as polite as we need to be. I would say, and I certainly share the member's view that this is a matter to be aggressive about, and indeed, we are aggressive about it.

And the province has been very aggressive about enforcing maintenance orders from other provinces here in Saskatchewan should someone move from another province to this province. And indeed, other provinces respond.

But I don't think the member underestimates how difficult sometimes it is to track somebody down who doesn't want to be tracked down, even within this province. And as you know, some non-custodial parents go to considerable length to avoid their obligations.

But I think it's fair to say that here we do, as you mentioned earlier, we do a really terrific job of enforcing maintenance enforcement orders — 24 per cent default rate compared to 85 per cent before the introduction of the legislation. And we're working with other provinces and other ministers of Justice to ensure that the experiences of those who are leaving the province and those who are coming to the province can be dealt with as well.

(1645)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, as it relates to a future protocol or agreement between the provinces, I wonder if you can tell me the differences that exist across the country. And I'm not asking for a list here in the province. We have a measure with respect to driver's licence, for example.

I'm wondering if that's a tool that other provinces have, that most other provinces have, that some have? But could you provide some general commentary on whether or not there is a lot of similarity between maintenance enforcement tools at the disposal of people like Mr. McNabb across the country?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, the approaches across the province are — across the country — are quite similar. There are a couple of provinces that don't provide for withholding of drivers' licences.

But I think it's important to note that Saskatchewan has a number of tools which other provinces don't have. One in particular is the ability to — which is shared with Manitoba — which is the ability to collect public locked-in pension plans . . . to, I'm sorry, to collect locked-in pension plans to free up the resources so that obligations can be addressed. And also the ability to access joint bank accounts.

So those are two things that some other provinces don't have which we have. But it's, I think, fair to say that we're constantly looking at what tools we can use in order to make sure that these obligations are fulfilled.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, I know from the caseload that I deal with, and I think my colleagues would agree, a large number of the cases that come before them in terms of maintenance enforcement that involve this interjurisdictional issue are non-custodial parents who are in Alberta. That's a particular . . . I think that's . . . Probably if you had to pick a province, clearly that would be the province with the highest number of non-custodial parents from Saskatchewan who have obligations back home here.

You commented earlier in one of your answers about the relationship that Saskatchewan has with other jurisdictions in terms of helping them with maintenance enforcement. I wonder, could you comment specifically on the relationship that we have with the province of Alberta, both in terms of us helping the Alberta Department of Justice with their issues, but also — and clearly more important for our taxpayers and mothers and fathers here at home trying to support their kids — the relationship that Alberta Justice has with us in terms of helping us with maintenance orders?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, the working relationship between the two provinces is a good one. The member's right that that is the largest group of out-of-province, non-custodial parents that we are concerned about in this context.

So Alberta does respond well to the requests for assistance, although it is the case that the Alberta legislation is not as effective as ours, which doesn't make it any easier. But the main issue with Alberta is, with the large numbers of people in that province who are in this category of non-custodial parents, mostly men, it's not always as fast as we would like it to be.

Mr. Wall: — With respect to the Alberta situation, Mr. Deputy Chair of committees, Mr. Minister, while we wait — and I think we're all encouraged — while we wait and hopefully not very long, for something to come before this Legislative Assembly from a Justice ministers' conference on the issue of a provincial agreement on co-operation with respect to maintenance enforcement, what specific agreements . . . do you have formal agreements in place with the province of Alberta, or is it an informal relationship that our two maintenance enforcement offices have?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The legislation that we have in place, Mr. Deputy Chair, provides for reciprocal arrangements with each of the other provinces, and there is no need within the provinces to have anything more specific than that. The provinces work through those arrangements without any written arrangements. But we do have written arrangements with every state in the United States and also with some other countries to provide for enforcements . . . reciprocal enforcements.

But I would say that the measure which is being considered or will be considered by deputy ministers of Justice and then ministers of Justice will speed up this process quite considerably.

So the arrangements that we have, the reciprocal arrangements we have, are with all the states of the Union plus some other countries. And the arrangements in Canada are just as effective but not as formal as that.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, a final question on this particular issue, and I will want to come back to the issue of child maintenance enforcement at a future date. But we'll defer to a few questions for the member for Cypress Hills with his one last question on this area.

Alberta and Manitoba would clearly be the provinces where there'd be more non-custodial parents that we are working with. Could you please tell me the differences in legislation in enforcement tools in those three . . . well in our three jurisdictions — Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Deputy Chair, in response to the member's question, in fact Manitoba is not such a popular spot for non-custodial parents who are not meeting their obligations, but Alberta and British Columbia are.

And I can say that with regards to Alberta, in terms of driver's licence withholding as an enforcement tool, it's not as . . . the Alberta legislation doesn't permit it to be as fast or as straightforward as it is here in Saskatchewan.

And one other matter which makes it more difficult with regards to Alberta is that the Alberta legislation limits by percentage of income the amount of which can be captured from the non-paying, non-custodial parent, whereas ours does not.

In terms of British Columbia, I might just say that the process by which to withhold drivers' licences is really quite cumbersome and not as quick as ours.

No, I know he mentioned Manitoba, but Manitoba is not as pressing a . . . Oh, you want to know about Manitoba? Well it's just to the west of . . . to the east of us.

Maybe I should think a bit more carefully before I make comments like that. Essentially the Manitoba legislation and ours is very similar. So there's not anything really I think which causes us any difficulty there.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, and your officials, thank you for allowing me an opportunity to ask you just a couple of questions before the

clock runs out. One of the issues that has been brought to my attention by community leaders in my constituency has to do with the cost of policing to their community specifically.

And while they find the policing costs quite high, what is particularly galling I guess is that they are asked to pay for policing that is not actually being provided. In many cases there are staffing shortages and unfilled positions in these communities and yet their costs are not adjusted accordingly.

And I've had a couple of questions directed to me by leaders of these communities and they would like me to address this specifically today. They feel that the charges that they are receiving for the unstaffed officer positions are totally unfair as they stand now. And what really upsets them the most is the fact that the surplus dollars are not being refunded to the communities experiencing the shortages but instead are being applied to the total provincial RCMP cost pool.

So since they feel this practice is unfair, I guess they would want me to ask you, what do you plan to do about this situation?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. As the member probably knows, the arrangements regarding costs of policing in the province has been under constant review by the task force which comprises, amongst others, members of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), representatives from SUMA, and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities). And the arrangements for costing . . . for charging for RCMP policing services has been worked out in that task force with those representatives from SUMA and SARM, as I say.

So to the extent that there are problems experienced by any given municipality, it would be appropriate for them to raise them with that task force. And I think all of the municipalities are aware of that route to address this concern.

I should say that the costs this year will be the same as last year. There won't be any increase and there will be credit for vacancies, which the member raised, credit for vacancies to those municipalities whose detachments were below full complement.

I should say that there are about . . . there are I think 65 highway patrol vacancies in the province. You know, I'm sure that the vacancies have been as high as 147 in the past. The numbers have reduced significantly, and by October of this year, the RCMP expects to be at full complement for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Deputy Chair, may I follow that up with a request for more information on the credits that you talked about. How will those credits be addressed to the communities that have been adversely affected by the costing of this police arrangement? Will that come directly in terms of a refund, a rebate; or will they be given credit toward the billing for policing services in the upcoming years?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well that is a good question, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Deputy Chairperson. It enables me to clarify

what I was saying.

As the member properly indicates, there have been vacancies in a number of detachments, and as I said, around 65 vacancies at the present time down from 147. Because of increase in costs of the RCMP as a result of increases in salaries and so on, the cost to the province would have increased.

The credits that would have been . . . the monies that represent reduced numbers from last year will enable us to hold the line on costs this year. So to be clear, the experience of municipalities in the past being below complement will enable the costs to each municipality this year to be the same as last year.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:04 p.m.